



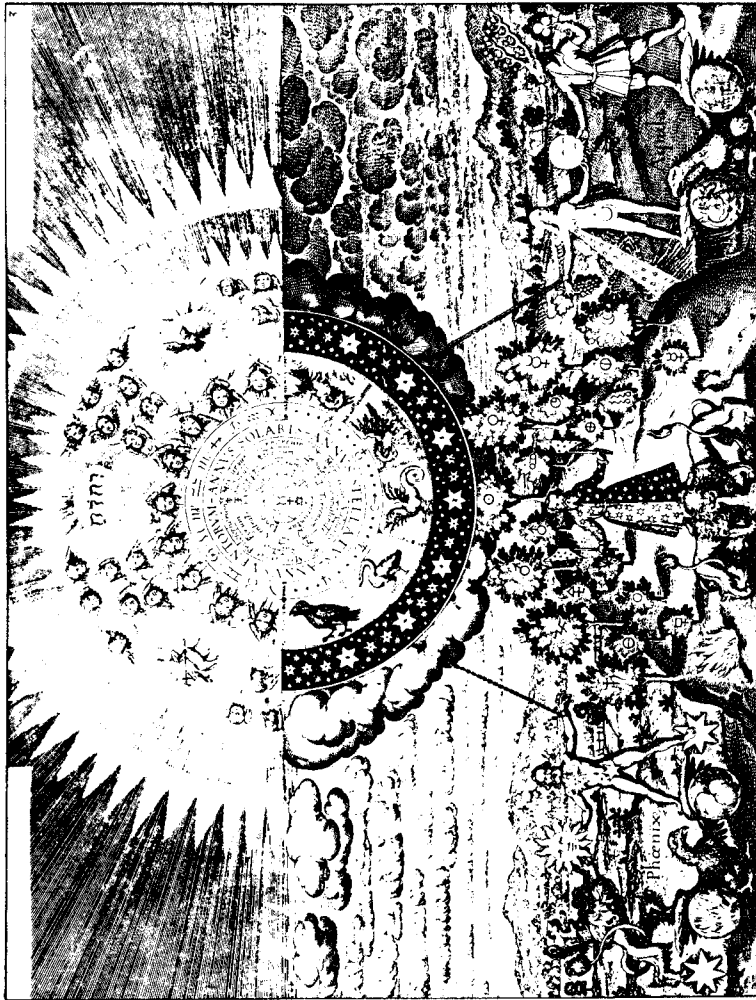
CAITLÍN AND JOHN MATTHEWS

THE WESTERN WAY

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE
WESTERN MYSTERY TRADITION



*The
Western Way*



*The
Western Way*

*A Practical Guide
to the
Western Mystery Tradition*

VOLUME I
THE NATIVE TRADITION

Caitlín and John Matthews

Foreword by Gareth Knight



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TO DOLORES ASHCROFT-NOWICKI

And to all who believe in the possibility of
 bringing things back from Faery-Land

The mythic truth is the whole truth.
P.L. Travers in a radio broadcast

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Foreword

Here is a book that answers a great need of our times. And it answers it very well.

That need is for a rational and informed description of how to apprehend the forces that form the structure of the 'inner worlds': those hidden forces that underpin and mould the outer world that we know through our physical senses. For a realization of the need to come to terms with these other dimensions of reality is fast coming upon Western man.

Those who have not yet understood this need are at times dismayed by what they see as a 'flight from reason'. However, this 'flight' ought to be realized for what it is. It is not a mindless rout of the irresponsible but the winging pinions of an informed intuition no longer content with intellectual preoccupation with surface appearances.

Others decry what they choose to call 'dabbling in the occult', which they consider either idly foolish or perversely misguided. Whilst we too would not wish to encourage the occult dilettante, those of us who have spent more years in this research than we care to remember feel, with all due humility, that we have gained in wisdom and human fulfilment rather than lost.

There is no shortage among us of able, responsible citizens – even if those less well informed may sometimes gasp incredulously when confronted with our view of truth. We who know, know it to be no facile escapism, but a hard and testing, though infinitely rewarding struggle towards truth: truth about what we ourselves are; our place in the universe; and our duties before God and the rest of the creation.

Stock political, scientific and religious answers to these questions leave many people unsatisfied today. Seeking within for the deeper issues may be one way out of a nuclear or ecological crisis – although ultimately it is more profound even than that! Crises pass – or come to pass. Man's relationship to eternity lasts for ever.

John and Caitlin Matthews bring to the subject not only erudition,

balance and commonsense, but also a wide practical experience. In some areas of that experience I have shared and so I confidently recommend anyone to put themselves in the guiding hands of the writers of this book. They will not be led astray.

Furthermore, the authors have a breadth of knowledge and wisdom that puts many more strident occult pundits to shame. They are as much at home in the angelic heights of Christian mysticism as with the 'lordly ones' in the depths of the hollow hills. And this is a living experience, not mere book knowledge. Although as readers will soon gather, their literary resources are profound.

This is an instruction book for the present and the future. The old time occult groups with their body of doctrine and rigid esoteric structure are fast becoming a thing of the past. Their good has been done. Their weighty volumes of doctrine remain as monuments and milestones along the way.

They may still help us now. But the esoteric students of the present and the future will be ones who take what they can find, in eclectic freedom, for the immediate purpose in hand. Their training will be no less rigorous for being more open and unstructured, their working groups no less powerful despite their relatively transitory, even *ad hoc*, nature.

To use a familiar, if somewhat over-used phrase, this is the approach to occult training in the New or the Aquarian Age.

John and Caitlín's *Western Way* will provide an Ariadne's thread to help a new generation of seekers find their way through the labyrinth. And go some way to enlighten less adventurous souls as to what the maze we call this world is all about.

Gareth Knight

INTRODUCTION

The inward spiral

[Our task is to be] the Secretaries, the interpreters and preservers of the memorials of our ancestors.

William Stukeley

Mankind, more than is realized, is an expression of the part of the earth upon which he subsists. A rose of the West should not aspire to bloom like a lotus of the East.

Gareth Knight: *The Rose Cross and the Goddess*

THREADING THE MAZE

In 1968 a book appeared called *The Western Mystery Tradition* (105). Its subject matter was the bedrock of primitive myth upon which most systems of Western magic are based. Its author, Christine Hartley, was a member of one of the leading esoteric schools of the time, and she was thus uniquely placed to comment on the magical tradition from within. Surprisingly, her book was almost the first since the Renaissance that attempted to deal with the Western Mysteries separately from those of the East, and with particular emphasis on the primitive material. There have been, and there still are, numerous publications on Qabala, Tarot, Astrology, and any number of other disciplines; but there has still been no serious attempt to follow Christine Hartley's lead. While her book is still valuable for its insights and perceptions, it leaves many questions unanswered. It does not, for example, attempt to relate the more ancient, native mystery traditions with those of the later, so-called Hermetic schools. Yet the one could scarcely have existed without the other, and an important relationship still exists between them. It is in part to fill this gap that the present work has been written, as well as to disprove the old adage that you cannot bring

anything back from the world of Faery. There is indeed much to be brought back, much that can be of value to us now, in our perennial quest for a transcendent reality. Above all, it is our intention to present a conceptual rather than a chronological view of the Western Mysteries: one that will serve as a practical guide to that vast realm, where, though we may go visiting, we remain largely strangers in a strange land.

But first it is necessary to define some of the terms used throughout this work, and which, for various reasons, may be unfamiliar.

The first is the term 'Western Way' itself. By this we are referring to a body of esoteric teaching and knowledge which constitutes a system of magical technique and belief dating from the beginning of time – the 'Foretime' in which our ancestors first began to explore the inner realms of existence. And it is a 'Western' way to distinguish it clearly from the Eastern and Oriental systems which have found so strong a foothold in the West in recent years, but which are really less applicable than our own native traditions.

We have chosen to use this term rather than the more usual 'Western Mystery Tradition' for two reasons. Firstly, because the disciplines normally included under that heading – Qabala, Alchemy, Gnosticism, the Occult Sciences – do not constitute the whole story; and secondly, because it is very much a path we shall be following: one which has been walked by many others before us, and which will be walked by many more to come. None the less, the term still stands as a most useful frame of reference when it comes to definitions: 'Western' rather than Eastern; 'Mystery' because hidden, an esoteric knowledge; 'Tradition' because it consists of material handed down orally or received from the group soul of the planet or the racial consciousness of the tribe.

With these few definitions in mind we can begin.

Imagine, then, that you are about to embark on a journey to an immeasurably distant and strange country. Whom do you take with you for companion and guide? If you are wise you will choose someone who knows the way and is familiar with the terrain. In the same way, if you choose to explore your own *inner* landscape, peopled from your cultural background and tradition, you should seek to know all that you can about those you may meet along the way, what they will say to you, what symbols they will show. You need to know the words that will open certain doors, and how to address those who guard them. You will need maps.



The inner spiral



The outer spiral

Figure 1 The Maze

One such map is the symbolic diagram known as the maze, and though you will meet with many other recurring images throughout the book – the tree, the circle and the cross, to name only three – it is one of the most important. The maze as a symbol of the path of initiation is found at many mystery sites throughout the world. It is a living glyph of the Western Way, through which all must pass in pursuit of their destiny within the framework of the Mysteries.

Taken together, the two volumes which make up this work constitute a completed maze pattern. That is to say, a journey *inward*, to the centre; and a journey *outward*, to the periphery. Volume one, which deals with the Native Tradition, from its origin in the Foretime to its present day manifestations in Neo-Paganism, is the inward spiral. Volume two, which concerns itself with the Hermetic Tradition – so called after its supposed founder Hermes Trismegistus – from its beginnings in Classical Antiquity to its current renaissance in the work of contemporary magical schools, is the outward spiral.

Together these two paths form the *prima materia* of the Western Way: the Native Tradition, more intuitive, earth conscious, Goddess-oriented; and the Hermetic Tradition, with its emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge, oneness with the godhead, superconsciousness. Together they balance each other out: the one probing deeper into the first mysteries of human awareness; the other seeking to utilize this inner understanding in a clearer, expositive way. Here the traveller learns to use what was taught on the inner journey – carrying it back into the light of day. By definition the journey outward cannot lead back to the same place.

The Hermetic Way is grounded in the perennial philosophy; the Native Tradition in the Otherworld. God or Deity is seen in terms of

elemental forces by the Native Traditionalists; while in the Hermetic Schools perception shifts from 'God out there' to God within the self. The evolution of consciousness is encompassed by both traditions. Just as the Hermetic cannot exist without the foundations of the Native, neither can the Native progress without the projection of the Hermetic. They are the root and branches of the tree of the Western Way.

Christine Hartley pointed out, in her pioneering study, that 'the original working of the Mysteries looked first backwards, and then forwards, and upon their basic teaching we may find the traditions and mysteries of our Western schools' (105). The two-way journey, into and out of the maze, is a continual spiral of discovery: we go inward to come out again, and when our thread is wound out fully we must return inwards to take stock, to garner our findings and rest. This is the pattern we must follow, if we desire to learn.

WESTERN FOLK-WEAVE

While most people consider the 'real' Western Mystery Tradition to reside in the Hermetic Tradition, others are coming to see it in the context of its foundations. Those who look to the major civilizations of the Middle East and Mediterranean for insight into the Mysteries fail to see the past about them. A tradition, like a prophet, is without honour in its own country. Other grass is greener and more succulent, and so it will ever appear. We have drawn many examples from the British tradition, not only as representative of the Western Way, but also because we have drawn from our own experience, ancestral memory and traditional heritage. What we have done here can be done just as well for other traditions and cultures. The Native Tradition of the West is approachable by all who have a Western consciousness and cultural identity.

Ultimately, East and West are unimportant, but each has its place. The Western Way has been so neglected, mostly since the onset of organized religion, that the individual quest has tended to be lost sight of. The saviours and prophetic figureheads have all had their purpose, but it has been above all to stimulate that interior search. 'Seek you first the Kingdom of Heaven – which lies within you' (21). To go beyond organized forms of religion we must first pick up the pieces of our development, the cross-currents, the influences and

causes, before we can go onwards to the time when mystery traditions will be neither Eastern or Western.

How, then, do we define West in Western Mystery Tradition? Geographically, from the Middle East westwards. Culturally, the margin is less easy to define. None of us are really natives of anywhere any longer. Even those families who lived in, say, Scotland for generations, were originally Norse, Pictish, Gaelic invading stock, with perhaps a few drops of 'native' blood. There are no pure blood-lines, no incontrovertible evidence for an apostolic succession in folk tradition. What happened once in the British Isles has now happened in the USA and elsewhere. Ethnic minorities have 'invaded' America in successive waves – English, French, Spanish, German, Scandinavian, Italian, to mention only a few. Latterly the cultural margin has been extended by Jews of all lands, Greeks, Russians, Japanese, Asian and African peoples.

This hotchpotch of racial types tends to keep up its various native traditions in its new homeland, for a few generations at least. Traditions were once upheld for longer periods, but now the influence of the media is tending to break down all separatist barriers. Whatever the prognostication it is doubtful whether humanity of the future will be possessed of one skin colouration, one cosmo-culture and one language: differences matter and home is still best. But the twentieth century has uprooted many people who are 'exiled' from their homes as refugees or immigrants in a strange land which no longer knows its own cultural identity.

The authors hold no brief for racism or extreme nationalism of any kind, merely wishing to point out that humanity consists of territorial animals who want their own plot of land and their own customs. For those who cannot achieve that much, their cultural being is deeply important. The folk-traditions and religious practices are made more precious because they are the one possession which cannot be taken away – they can be practised under the most rigorous tyranny, as we know from the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, from Christians in Russia, or indeed all religions under the present regime in Albania. Yet even in Communist and non-religious states, the folk-soul is never jettisoned, since even here it is understood how deep is the appeal to the people.

Hitler's reversion to Teutonic mythology during the rise to popularity of the National Socialist Party has been pointed out as a salutary reminder of what damage the folk-soul can wreak, when let

loose or harnessed to one manic individual's vision. But while it is true that following the native tradition too closely can result in reversion to type, and that beneath the veneer of civilization, religion and sophistication, the folk-soul is still strong, this is not a negative factor in our make-up. It can be powerfully on our side in times of crisis and war; it can serve to anchor us if we are confused or unhappy, and give us a sense of belonging in the face of exile or loss.

Folk traditions and religious beliefs as well as cultural values are sometimes imposed upon one people by another, as in the case of European Americans upon American Indians, Dutch settlers upon black South Africans, British immigrants upon Australian aborigines – but the subsequent culture has dug itself a pit thereby into which it must fall in the course of time. The adverse karma and resulting social confusion will be still to reap.

Yet it is out of the supposed separateness of Occident and Orient that a transcendent unity emerges. In esoteric circles there are no real opposites – only different ways of approaching the same goal. The West is a place of manifestation: the East a place of beginnings. Just as the sun tracks from East to West across the heavens, so does esotericism reflect this movement. In the East religious devotions are practised at the day's beginning – bathing in Mother Ganga; hymns to the sun; morning pujas performed in answer to generations of belief. In the West the devotional practices come at the day's end with vespers, evensong, the greeting of the Sabbath. Although religions of both East and West perform their devotions throughout the whole of the day and night, these are significant aspects of esoteric manifestation.

In no way should we spurn or undervalue the Eastern achievement, nor decry the practice of Eastern techniques by Westerners. The East has opened to us the possibilities of the Western Way, giving precise terminology to concepts no longer expressible in European languages – avatar, dakini, karma, nirvana, sakti, mandala, yantra, mantra – all have become established words in esoteric practice. Eastern religious and esoteric techniques are as relevant as any practiced in the West, although Eastern concepts and understandings are sometimes difficult to comprehend until a mature spiritual level has been achieved. Culture and heredity give insight into certain metaphors and conceptualizations, so that a Parisian may have a perfect sympathy with Taoism because of incarnational links, and likewise a Sikh experience strong bonds with Catholicism. The fact remains that birth into a certain place, time,

and family demands an answering response – a life-lesson to be accomplished in this incarnation. After this is met and accepted, it is again possible to pursue these incarnational links.

The West remains very much anchored in earth, in material expression of itself; while the East seems impoverished materially, hiding its interior riches. This is changing as Westernization strikes to the heart of even remote lands. The necessary transfusion must be allowed to take place: interior and exterior progress to be exchanged. But careful, responsible transplanters are needed.

Our intention in making a study of the Native Tradition in the West is to seek the roots of our consciousness, to track our development in accordance with the needs of humankind. This is after all where our genetic impulse has been coded, from where our hereditary memory first springs. To go beyond our roots is the intention of this book, not to remain among them.

The mystery traditions – Western and Eastern – are concerned with keeping open the door between the worlds, of letting through and mediating energies from inner to outer worlds, of co-operating with the Otherworld reality of which our world is a yet unrealized resonance. The spiritual purpose of life is easily lost sight of, but more and more people are dissatisfied with the quality of a totally materialist-oriented life and are searching with a good deal of determination to find that purpose for themselves. This individual search has not always been a matter of choice – it was once only to be found within the at once liberating and limiting area of organized religion. This is changing. By the often unthinking use of terms like 'Aquarian consciousness' and 'New Age enlightenment' many people are rejecting the old for the new and untried cults of the day – many of which turn out to be organized on the same materialistic lines the escapees thought they had left behind.

In finding the right way for them, individuals are driven back on their own resources, with which they must discover their needs and expectations, as well as their potential. No system or search for spiritual purpose is valid without self-criticism or self-knowledge. A formal expression, such as joining a religious group, is not always necessary, although it can give guidelines to follow.

A more interesting phenomenon is the way in which large numbers of people are seeking their roots in the earliest and oldest forms of belief. Circles and standing stones exert a growing fascination, shamanistic ways and other cultures are a draw, the re-emergence of the Goddess as a clear religious archetype all point to a rediscovery of

ancient, traditional knowledge. While this is connected in a larger way with the pursuit of the perennial philosophy, it is also indicative of the self and its roots in the native traditions.

We need to communicate with our folk-soul if only to dismiss the spurious uses to which it can be put. We have our belonging – in our tribe, our nation, our people, and this is how it should be. But we are also citizens of the world, of the new Aquarian Age. It is possible to foster national pride yet to reject racialism; to balance our love of the past with our responsibility for the future. We must ask ourselves if we want to belong to the earth on which we walk, or be cut off forever from our roots, bereft of a sense of belonging.

If, as we claim, the Western Way has its roots in the earliest times, do we have any assurance of uninterrupted descent from those times to our own? Certainly, if we are looking for some kind of apostolic succession, we are going to be disappointed. There may exist families whose life-style has altered little over hundreds of years, who have retained their intimacy with nature and have handed down a collection of wise lore and belief, but they are surely rare (see chapter 5). Nowadays people are not bound to their place of birth, but move wherever work and circumstances take them; adherence to the faith of one's parents is rare, and where the religious instinct persists, it will as likely lead to some baseless cult as to one of the great Eastern philosophies. So how can we share knowledge to which we have never had physical access? Given that continuity of tradition is to some extent severed, how, for instance, can we learn why certain ancient stone circles were erected and what rites were performed there?

Some methods of recalling this type of information are presented within this book, though there are many others. The Age of Reason has established itself so firmly in the Western imagination that such techniques may well be frowned upon; we hope to show, however, that besides the cult of the Noble Savage and the worship of scientific Enlightenment, we have another heritage. The tales and traditions of our homeland are also ours, to be immediately seized and loved; for we have other gifts than reason at our disposal. The creative imagination, so often repressed, needs to be unleashed before it can be trained. We are all capable of foresight, hindsight and insight if we take the trouble to find out about such things. And while it is perhaps too easy to play the visiting archeologist in our own past – to fashion romantic fiction into historical fact – the knowledge of head and heart need not be at variance if we balance our instinctive awareness with rational judgement and cool assessment.

However, though the threading of the maze may become a symbolic journey from A to B – whatever the digressions – the Western Mystery Tradition cannot be dealt with chronologically, any more than it can be dealt with in a frame of pure rationality. Insights come in many guises and at many different levels of time and experience. One may learn as much about the inner reality of Atlantis from Dion Fortune (79) or Helena Blavatsky (23) as from Plato (20). All three *experienced* what they describe at a deeper level than most, yet their approach was individually different.

Esoteric knowledge generally, subjected to empirical scholarship, may reveal things unrecognized by those who set them down. But there is no hard and fast method of telling true from false in these areas – unless it be through the individual's response to the *symbolic* reality expressed by images and signs of the Mysteries, behind which can be discerned the essential truth.

In the past, this has all too often been made the excuse for speculation without even the most basic foundation. Perhaps inevitably so. Speculation is certainly no stranger to these pages – it could not be given the nature of the subject – but all that we have to say about the Western Mystery Tradition has been submitted to the test of personal experience. We have tried all the exercises, followed the pathworkings, done the meditations and worked with the techniques – mostly over a long period and with the help of others. To them, as to our other supporters, both outer and inner, we owe a debt of gratitude. But even more do we owe a debt to those who have walked the Western Way before us, who have left signposts along the road for us to follow. By working with these vital images it is possible to trace the pattern of the maze, inward and then outward again towards the future.

It requires patience to retrieve lost material by these means, but the knowledge that the way has been walked by others before us is comforting: they have left the path clearer for us, and their knowledge is currently available for our guidance. Such knowledge lives on in the oral traditions of song and story, of which we retain a surprising amount thanks to the exertions of nineteenth century folklorists, who rescued much material due for cultural demolition in the nick of time.

The other source of lost material is the folk-soul, the group soul of each nation which exists in the blood as well as the memory, and forms a collective wellspring of imagery and belief. Whenever a legend lives on or a tradition survives, there lie the clues we

must seek. The fragmentary nature of such clues renders them frustratingly elusive; but truth will surface from deeper levels not appreciable by normal consciousness, and can be encouraged to do so by various techniques, such as those provided here.

It may be argued that the stimulation of early belief patterns in this way is unhealthy and even dangerous, yet we would do well to remember that civilized though we account ourselves, there has been more savage destruction in this century than the world has ever seen. We are all aware of the impulse for destruction within our society, but is this not because we have ignored the knowledge of the mysteries by which our ancestors lived? They once lived in harmony with the universe as they saw and understood it; it would seem that now that we know so much more we have lost the way of that harmonious relationship. Our responsibility is surely, therefore, to relearn techniques for holistic living – ways which extend to the spirit as well as the body – not by relegating consciousness back several millennia, but by integrating our newly rediscovered knowledge into twentieth century life.

Some very pertinent words by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski on the subject of magic and myth are worth quoting here. Myth, he maintained,

is not a dead product of past ages. It is a living force, constantly surrounding magic by new testimonies. Magic moves in the glory of past tradition, but it also creates its atmosphere in ever-nascent myth. As there is the body of legends already fixed, standardized, and constituting the folk-lore of the tribe, so there is always a stream of narratives linked to those of the mythological time. Magic is the bridge between the golden age of primaeval craft and the wonder working power of today. Hence the formulas are full of mythological allusions, which, when uttered, unchain the powers of the past and cast them into the present (156).

THE RITUAL STANCE

It is this 'bridge', of which Malinowsky writes, that we have set ourselves to re-establish by walking the Western Way. Hence our insistence on the importance of the beginnings of esotericism, which are too easily avoided or neglected by many as childish or primitive.

It is true that an incestuous, insular and murky spirit can pervade any study of primitive levels of awareness, but this is not our intention. The clear and primal energy of the Foretime is alive within the timelessly active present of the Otherworld – which is reached by many means. The New Age has seen many come to grief through reaching for 'higher things', through a forced assumption of unrealized spirituality and idealistic mysticism. The techniques of any art – occult or otherwise – are hard-won and painfully maintained, as any dancer, singer, or performer will attest; the way of the shaman, magician and mystic no less so. Any work on the inner levels must be sustained by effort, based on hard graft, informed by spiritual dedication and aimed towards a balanced good. Fervent would-be mystics arrive all too often at *unbalanced* good which causes unaccountable suffering to both themselves and others. What is needed are the skills of the technician, combined with an inspired intention. This is the ritual stance of the initiate, who is able to travel within both the past and the present and know them for the same despite all their initial differences.

We are really starting afresh, therefore, in an effort to show the way back to our roots – so long neglected except by a minority, often misunderstood or misrepresented, but still very much a living force. Thus in chapters 1–3 we have dealt with the beginnings of the Western Mystery Tradition, those first stirrings of the religious impulse which led our ancestors to focus their attention on the elements: the earth beneath their feet, the sky above them, the stones and trees and rivers which were, to them, living beings capable of independent action and thought, and with whom they shared the inheritance of the earth their Mother. From there, in chapter 4, we have taken the journey to the Otherworld, that vast paradigm of our own consciousness which extends as limitlessly as the realm of the imagination – in other words as far as forever – and which contains everything else in its timeless and placeless grasp. Those who have travelled the road to *and* from that place have formed their own world within the borders of our own. They are the Secret People, who build and maintain the inner realm in the heart of every land (279), who stand at the centre of the maze, looking backward and forward. With them we follow the movement from tribal to individual consciousness. In the movement outward we must look for a consciousness that will contain both, a mingling of Native and Hermetic traditions.

Here we can offer only definitions: some widely accepted, others

less so. Who, for instance, can say what they mean when they talk of inner plane entities, or of the Inner Plane itself? We can define these things, but can we reach at the reality behind them? Nothing is so fixed that it remains unchanging, or unchangeable. Those who set out to experience these things personally may well return with new definitions which are just as acceptable as any that are currently held.

If this seems confusing, or suggests that there is no certainty in these things, one must look behind them, at the reality from which they stem, a reality with which most have lost contact in this age, but which nevertheless exists as it has always done, as a foundation upon which to build. We may talk of God or Goddess, Mother Earth or Father Sky, or we may use the abstract terms of science and call it Creation; but whatever we do we cannot ignore it for long. It is the fundamental reality behind everything we do and are and feel.

Accusations of parochialism aimed at followers of the Western Way fail to recognize this, and that the images dealt with under the headings of myth or magic, Foretime, or Otherworld, are transcendental. They belong to no culture, tribe, or nation, but are part of a universal wisdom. They happen to be the Western projections of something which is really world wide.

In popular imagination, notably within overtly occult circles, the Western Mystery Tradition carries connotations of conservative 'traditional' magic – that of the qabalist and the ritual magician rather than the shaman or the priest. It is connected with heavily nationalistic mythology, with philosophical and complex mysteries. Too often it is associated with learned and complacent esoteric knowledge: a kind of middle-aged, middle-class freemasonry for undecided Christians and dissenting Jews. Such an image avoids the challenge of many New Age developments which are emanating from a new generation of seekers eager to walk the Western Way, and it neglects the accomplishment and dedicated survival of many home-grown movements: witchcraft – the native shamanism of Europe – the village healer and folk-singer. Revivals of interest in the Native Heritage arise and fade, but the real tradition is passed on.

These movements may appear to many as the dregs of a dying religion or folklore; but the same comment could be levelled at what passes for mainstream Western Mystery Tradition. The time for dynamic reappraisal has come. The Native Tradition formed the basis of the Hermetic Tradition. Now the Hermetic Tradition, in its late nineteenth century guise, is foundering, needing to be replaced and remodelled in the light of New Age realization. We now know

everything: the world has been catalogued, exposed, explored. There is nothing more to seek – except within: the mystery of ourselves and our inner levels. As a civilized people we have lost any sense of a real inner perspective: the mythologies of revealed religion have been made virtually irrelevant by contemporary restatement. Once reduced to the lowest common factor they fail to excite or inform the average seeker after spiritual nourishment. The trained shaman, magician, mystic is an anomaly in the modern world. Maps of the inner world are as rare as maps of Treasure Island. We have lost our inner currency on the way to civilization and industrial progress. The teachers are now few and the seekers many. How shall they be fed? We give our children stones instead of bread when we force them from childhood to adulthood without the salvific story, the ritual response, the inner dimension which transforms the mundane world with its touch. The world is crying for a better, brighter thing; but it will not be found among materialism and spiritual bathos.

We know better than to scrap all the old ways of spiritual survival, however. Now, as never before, the world is engaged in a great rediscovery of its spiritual heritage, and though few are aware of their part in this process, more are learning. Tracing our links with the distant past can be difficult, like trying to discover our matrilineal forebears – an exacting task requiring intuitive and sensitive research. In the West, a child takes its father's name; the mother's lineage being soon forgotten. We all know well enough about our patrilineal, exoteric self; but of our matrilineal, esoteric self we remain largely innocent.

The Western Way holds many of the secrets of our kinship with the earth. As we will hope to show in chapter 2, it guards the knowledge of who we *really* are, and can confer the keys of our true heritage.

But do not be misled into thinking that this is yet another system to grant you quick riches or cosmic knowledge. The way is often long and hard, requiring great discipline and dedication. There are few short cuts. We are dealing with questions of personal identity and relationship with a tradition as old or older than recorded time. We are dealing, ultimately, with our place in the cosmos. What will be found within these pages is a journey – long and sometimes strange – leading inward to the centre of the maze of being, and out again. As to what point is finally reached, that will depend on the individual – what he or she brings to the work, and on his or her intentions. We have only the stuff of our own common clay to work with. For the

rest, the forces and energies of the traditions themselves will be found to give both a sense of direction and a rate of travel.

There is no executive board or central authority governing the Western Way. No church, no pope, no king of the witches. Instead there are disparate movements and groups, some of whom would not associate very happily together, but in whom can be discerned the seal of the Western Way. This seal is also a recognition made between individuals following the same path. That imprint may be overlaid by pride and bigotry, hidden by fear and uncertainty, but it is always apparent – a common kinship which binds the Western Mystery Tradition into a loose family unit.

At no time does the Western Way advocate a retreat from the real world. Western esotericism has always integrated spiritual and material worlds into one unit: the way of the sadhu, sannyasin and monk has always been a specialist one. We ourselves have not set out to convert anyone to anything. What we have written may reveal your path, or show the path you have already been walking in a clearer light. There are now so many people who have dropped out of or never belonged to a tradition that certain understandings once common can no longer be taken for granted.

We have no wish to set up neo-pagans against any revealed religion. The dawning of the new Age of Aquarius sees many people searching for 'whatsoever things are good and perfect' (Rom. 12:2) wherever they find them. Systematization is not an Aquarian consideration: closed spiritual disciplines and incestuous esoteric groupwork are now being discarded in favour of individual, personal commitment and public meditation. Much confusion arises from solitary work however, and commitment does not have much drive when enthusiasm flags. The realization that all religions and spiritual systems have their confluence in common purpose is a strength. We hope that those already following a defined path will increase their awareness of and commitment to it, considering how far they are meeting its demands and how they are best suited to cope with its challenges. We hope that those who are struggling to clarify their path will find it, perhaps not as a result of reading this book but in reaction to it. We ask the reader to use whatever is personally useful, to individualize the material in whatever way is practicable – while respecting the specific instructions which preface certain exercises.

The product of this inner journey is the recovery of our own traditional wisdom, often revealed by symbols during dreams or

insights received through meditation. The guardianship of the Western Mysteries has been, until recently, in the hands of esoteric orders and their followers; increasingly things have changed and will change still more drastically. The esoteric schools have done their work well, seeding the knowledge of the Mysteries throughout the world; but the time is approaching for the symbols and systems to be regenerated by an influx of new yet ancient material, arising from within the group-soul and hereditary memory of ordinary people.

The work of recovery has already begun on many levels and within many disciplines. We are not all equipped to become mystics, magicians, healers, or wise women; yet by virtue of our blood and by our location within the West, we are inheritors of the Western Way. While there will always be special mediators, the new way is to take up a personal responsibility for our inner path. If you have the courage to try some of the techniques and exercises to be found within this book, you will find yourself able to contact and work with the Western Mystery Tradition.

The guardianship passes on, as it ever has, to the next generation: but with a difference. The emphasis now will be on individual work, either at ancient sites or within the home – always seeking a closer affinity with the tradition which taught us once before and will teach us again, if we give it the chance.

In effect, you, the readers of this book, are the new guardians. It is your generation which holds the threads of the great tapestry which makes up the Western Way. It is for you to continue the weaving, spun out of countless separate threads, which together make up the wondrous pattern of our tradition.



PLEASE READ THIS SECTION BEFORE ATTEMPTING ANY OF THE EXERCISES

NOTES ON THE EXERCISES IN THIS BOOK

Each of the techniques in this book carries its own instructions, but a few general remarks here may help clarify matters for the inexperienced practitioner. We believe that the Western Way is a living path, not a theoretical concept, and that you, the reader, have a right to experience it for yourself. As with a good cookery book, every exercise has been tested and tried. The provenance of the techniques varies: our own work within the Western Way has provided us with the basis of them, and we have drawn liberally on oral tradition, written lore and received material for the substance. We have tried not to be sectarian in our choice of material – the Western Way is diverse, combining Pagan, Christian and Qabalist with priest, witch and magician, as well as including other gentle souls who range the whole gamut of the New Age groups. The exercises have been designed for the lone reader with little or no experience, but each is adaptable for use in groups and can be ‘stepped-up’ judiciously for those who know the ropes. Some exercises cannot be done without prior reference to others, but otherwise there has been no attempt at grading. If they are taken in the order of appearance, a logical progression through the mysteries will emerge.

All the exercises, unless otherwise stated, should be performed seated comfortably in an upright chair and in circumstances free from interruption: put your phone on the hook or warn your family that you are not disturbable for an hour. Some of the outside exercises, especially at sacred sites, are likely to be fraught with interruption: while it is difficult to tune into a sacred earth-centre in the midst of the tourist season, it is still possible, given a modicum of common sense and a great deal of concentration. It is assumed that the reader will be aware of the importance of quiet, rhythmic breathing and of bodily relaxation when performing the exercises. Without these two essentials, so often stressed but so seldom applied, the results of your performance will be negligible.

The meditations within this book can be worked in two ways.

Either you can read through the instructions and memorize them or you can record them on tape and perform them while listening. Pathworkings, as meditations are often called these days, stem from the Qabalistic method of working upon the paths of the Tree of Life – they should not be confused with the kind of guided imagery techniques often used by the psychological schools. If you decide to record the meditations remember to leave sufficient pauses in between the text where you may need to visualize or think about the material. The technique of pathworking is easily learned: it is like listening to a story, only you are the protagonist. Instead of seeing yourself as on a television screen, *be there* with all the clarity of your visual powers; you should be looking out of your own eyes at the scenes before you, not seeing yourself doing something – which indicates that you are not in alignment with the pathworking.

Immediately after meditating, and indeed after each exercise, write down your impressions. Like dreams, they will escape otherwise. Having a record of your work is a useful check for the future when you may wish to branch out into other areas of exploration. Meditation is a means for you to explore your inner world which borders the Otherworld (see chapter 4). The reality you meet in the Otherworld is consistent within its own boundaries and if you follow its code you will be safe: follow the way set down, respect the guardians, and be alert for landmarks. Pathworking is not a form of Dungeons and Dragons fantasy-gaming, so keep a serious approach as well as your sense of humour. If you take a wrong step, if you meet with something you didn't expect, or are reminded of some terrible past event in your life which is painful to contemplate, don't panic; all this is grist to your mill. Meditation tends to throw up aspects of the personality which have not been integrated fully, but the theme of the mysteries is ‘know yourself’. Learn not to run away but to face up to your propensities; start bearing responsibility for your personal development and your spiritual growth will go forward steadily.

Your experiences will be uniquely different from anyone else's so that, while it is sometimes helpful to compare notes with fellow travellers on the Western Way, it can be confusing and detrimental to your progress to attempt to speak about your findings to someone who is not involved in similar work. This is not said to foster secrecy or inspire suspicion among your friends, but because everyone must experience *for themselves* the realizations implicit on the path. However much you love other human beings, you cannot attain enlightenment on their behalf: they must find their own way, make

their own metaphor and do their own realizing. We each aim to potentize our individual capabilities and to perceive more clearly our relationship with the spiritual evolution of our planet, not with the object of self-aggrandizement, but in order to gain control over our bodily, psychic and spiritual vehicles, enabling them to be effective instruments in the work of planetary service. This pattern of service underlies the work of the Western Way and should be borne in mind by those who have any qualms about working on themselves in a seemingly selfish manner. Any measure of control which you gain over yourself has a positive effect on the world around you. World powers may seem to run our lives, but in effect, we each have a contribution to make towards self-governance.

It is useful in meditation to have some kind of opening and closing device, to demarcate your areas of operation. These devices are used to avoid confusion between physical and psychic levels and to establish both mental adjustment and right intention. We have offered some suggestions below, but if you don't care for them, then write and use your own – they will be far more efficacious than devices written by others and employed without thought. Like the Celts who, in the presence of strangers, swore oaths by 'the gods of my tribe', feel free to do the same, according to preference.

To start a meditation, imagine yourself dressed as a pilgrim about to pass between the worlds. Say the following:

I stand at the door with staff and pack,
May God [or the Gods] protect me there and back.

To take protection upon yourself is not necessarily to expect devils and dangers, but to show that you undertake your inner journey with intention – and that is probably the most important requirement of all. You can substitute the name of your spiritual protector and incorporate your personal or clan totem (see exercise 1) in the following chant:

From light to light,
From this world to the Otherworld,
Through the thresholds,
In the name of [protector], I come bearing the [symbol or totem].

To return from meditation, you can repeat your entry chant with the intention of going back, or modify the second chant to read:

From the Otherworld to my world,

strongly imagining your personal symbol as you do so. Many people employ the simple device of opening and closing a pair of imaginary doors or curtains.

Consciously close off any esoteric work you do from the rest of your life: this is common sense psychic hygiene which is often neglected. If you have ever tried to get a good night's sleep after doing your accounts or after having a flaming row with a friend, you will know what we mean. A quick sealing-off gesture made with intention takes only a few seconds and is preferable to leaving your psyche running like a car engine.

None of the exercises in this book are actively harmful if you follow the instructions carefully and use your common sense. Any technique which develops little-used abilities can be initially disorienting, so expect a certain upheaval of consciousness in the first few weeks. Do you remember your first day at school or at work – how tired you felt and how disinclined to repeat the experience? Well, these exercises may be like that. Likewise, any technique can be abused by those individuals who account themselves experts on everything (read Franny's experience of the Orthodox Jesus Prayer in *Franny and Zooey* by J.D. Salinger, 222). Generally speaking, take one exercise at a time, until you understand how each works. After all, no one would attempt to learn Greek, how to drive, or master the cello in one week. The Western Way will wait, so be patient with yourself and take time to master each technique. There are no instant, slot-machine results here, and no 'right' answers. You alone possess the key to them for, without your participation, the techniques are worthless.

We are not here concerned with promoting or producing psychic phenomena. No doubt parapsychologists and psychic dabblers find much to instruct and entertain them in spoon-bending and match-box levitating, but the producer of gratuitous psychic phenomena is an embarrassment to family and friends, as well as to him or herself – one who has need of help, not encouragement. Just as sufferers from epilepsy need medical assistance to cope with their disability, so the genuine psychic or sensitive needs to understand the nature and problems of psychic gifts. The follower of the Western Way need not be concerned with becoming psychic so much, as aware of his or her own potentiality as an opener of ways, a walker between the worlds of spirit and matter, an inheritor and wielder of traditional wisdom within the human scheme of existence, an enlightener of dark places within the human consciousness.

As you become more deeply involved in inner work so will you begin to sensitize your being to the workings of both inner and outer worlds: life-lessons will be thrown up more frequently as you participate in the earth's own subtle changes and disturbances. This may be disturbing at first, but gradually you will learn to cope with the kind of inner pressure which sometimes builds up. Minor headaches are to be expected from time to time in this work. At the onset of any physical problems, however minor, check that you are sealing-off properly and 'earth' yourself in with a good hot meal after meditating. If you are ill, depressed or otherwise under the weather, leave the techniques alone until you feel better. They are intended for practical application to your everyday life and if that is under pressure and your circumstances emotionally fraught, then they are a burden you can do without. Beware also of using the Otherworld, your inner landscape, as an escape from life's traumas. If you are pushing yourself on all levels, outer and inner, your physical vehicle can become very depleted in vitality, resulting in an etheric body which is paper-thin and offering little protection. The only cure is regular rest, relaxation and a complete break from inner work. Read harmless novels rather than improving literature; watch television or do the gardening, but don't step up the inner work.

Do not attempt these exercises if you use drugs whether for kicks or medicinally. Hallucinogens may seem to offer a quick route to nirvana but they more often result in a short-circuit rather than a short-cut. Whatever your path, the truth is the same: you can only get there under your own steam. Rocket-engines won't help you and the pressure can be crushing. If you have a condition for which medicinal drugs are prescribed, then you should not be attempting inner work while that condition prevails. Imbalances in the body are the result of inner disturbances in your being and while drugs correct the imbalances to some extent, they often do not penetrate to the root cause.

Walking the Western Way in isolation can be a lonely business at times; nevertheless, there is a genuine companionship among practitioners of the way which transcends time and space. The landmarks on the path, the guardians whom you encounter on the way have been recognized and experienced by others before you, as they will be again by those who come after you. The authors wish you a happy and enjoyable journey into your heritage. They would be interested to hear from anyone who has any unusual or interesting experiences resultant from using these techniques over a long period. A stamped,

addressed envelope sent via the publishers of this book will contact them.

At the end of the book is a discography which may help provide suitable music to accompany the exercises, where this is appropriate. Music is the greatest opener to the mysteries, though we are now so desensitized to its effect through hearing muzak wherever we go, it may take some adjusting to its full potential.



CHAPTER 1

The old religion

The cult-man stands alone in Pellam's land . . .
 he can fetch things new and old . . .
 the things come down from heaven together
 with the kept memorials.

David Jones: *Anthemata*

In the old days when we were a strong and happy people all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living centre of the hoop and the circle of the four quarters nourished it.

John G. Neihardt: *Black Elk Speaks*

RITE AND FORETIME

'Once upon a time, there was no time, and it was then that . . .' is the traditional opening of a tale told by a Breton storyteller, immediately placing his audience into another realm of existence. It is into this 'once upon a time' that we must go to find the first traces of the Western Way, for to start our story within recorded history would be to leave out the most important of beginnings. It is in this 'no time' that we find the Otherworld – a dimension where the gods live yet in the inner landscape of our spiritual home. The Otherworld is the Western equivalent of the Australian aborigines' Dreamtime. It is not a memory of the past, nor a remnant of some Golden Age, but a living present where past and future meet and mingle.

The scope of this first volume is contained within the world and work of the shaman and the shamanka, his female counterpart. They, together with their lineal descendants, are the Native Traditionalists who work within a known and familiar pattern which has

evolved from earliest levels of tribal consciousness. The current upsurge of interest and revival of the Old Religion has tended to focus the events and beliefs of the Foretime in a spotlight of reverential awe: revivalists of the Native Tradition tend to imitate shamanic rites and primitive beliefs slavishly as though the intervening centuries were as nothing. When and where these practices are relevant to modern life, the experience of the Old Religion and of the shaman are totally valid: the essential seed-ideas and ancient knowledge of the Foretime onward are available to us via the Otherworld journey (see chapter 4 and exercise 8) where the archetypal wisdom is stored. But that there should be no error, we must consider that life in the Foretime was hard, and religion was not a leisure activity to be luxuriously indulged in. Religion was a fundamental way of living life. Magic, as we understand it, did not exist: the whole of life was magical, in one sense. Yet there was nothing within creation which was truly supernatural. These seemingly contradictory statements are resultant upon any attempt to enter the Foretime – wherein life was infused with the numinous nature of the gods – from the standpoint of today – wherein everything is explicable from a scientific premise.

Before we make that attempt we must understand where we are in relation to consciousness, for the Western Way is very much the path of consciousness and its evolution. Symbolic truth is as true now as it was in the Foretime, yet the means of that truth – often conveyed by image, story or music – changes as the consciousness of humanity evolves. According to the prevailing consciousness at any one historical cross-section of linear time, so will different levels of symbolic truth be revealed. The development and evolution of human consciousness is the motivating factor in the Western Way; it is the impulse which sets seekers upon the path, from shaman to scientist, determined to find the unifying factors of physical or outer life with spiritual or inner life. The capacity to understand and equate these factors is dependent upon the level of consciousness brought to bear upon this search.

The first steps upon the way are taken within the Native Tradition where tribal or collective consciousness prevails: out of the tribe emerges the shaman who experiments with individual consciousness – the next step – by means of identifying with the numinous quality of creation as personified by the gods, by synthesizing this experience and transmitting it in an appropriate form to the tribe. The necessary next step to individual consciousness is one which cannot be taken

simultaneously by all: this evolution takes many generations and is partially achieved by the presence and work of the shaman and a growing body of initiates who have already begun to make the transition within the tribe. The Native Tradition of any country takes its people on the long journey from tribal to individual consciousness, just as its Hermetic or esoteric Tradition attempts to lead people from individual to cosmic consciousness, in which evolved humanity will perceive its collective responsibility (Figure 2).

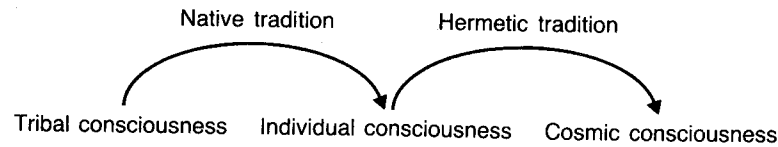


Figure 2

The task of religions, both old and new, has been to inculcate this evolutionary process through the means at its disposal. The varying success of this movement can be gauged by a quick mental reconnoitre through one's own life experience to date. In the Foretime this search was begun by means of contact with the mineral kingdom and with the earth's vital energies, which led on to an understanding and personification of these energies with god-forms. While the Native Tradition works from the immediate and familiar forces of the earth towards an evolved understanding of a cosmic plan or single, centralized Deity, it is the way of the Hermetic Tradition to perceive the cosmic and hierarchical forces which motivate the universe and identify their operation within elemental and imagined god-forms, as we shall see in volume 2.

Currently, the Western World is still struggling to throw off the last vestiges of tribal consciousness which have not yet worked themselves out. The revival of the Old Religion under the form of the neo-pagan movement and renewed interest in the Native Traditions of many lands are resonances of this struggle: it is one wherein the best of the ancient ancestral wisdom is retrieved and the unregenerate forms discarded as inappropriate. We shall be looking closer at this phenomenon in chapter 5 and assessing the development of the Native Tradition since the Foretime. But before we can follow the way of the earth and of the gods, before we take ship for the

Otherworld, we must enter the world of the Foretime – the 'once upon a time' of our ancestors.

There is an Everliving in which past, present and future are one, and when we brood upon the past it may be that our intensity brings us to live in that which we brooded upon. It is not only in vision that we revisit the past; our hearts may sink into it and know what others have known,

wrote the nineteenth century poet and mystic, 'A.E.' (218). To 'know what others have known' is never easy and when we make excursions into the prehistory of the Foretime we need atavistic sensitivity in order to see with the eyes of our ancestors and perceive with their consciousness. Imagine a time when feeling and sensation were a means of perception, when people shared a common consciousness, communicating in subliminal ways, sensitive to changes of weather – as animals are – aware of the seasonal round, and so deeply connected to the land that there could be no distancing from it. These were the Firstborn – we do not speak of Neanderthal, Mesolithic or Homo Erectus, for these are but convenient labels to hang on old bones. All cultures have had their Foretime – indeed, some primitive peoples are still living through theirs – and what is written here may stand for many of them in times when land-masses, which we know today as continents, were connected and when national divisions were undifferentiated.

The first intimations of deity were subtly blended of many understandings: of the earth energies whose currents crystallized into natural features of hill, stream and tree; and of the ever-present power of the ancestors before the ancestors. It was a nameless, sensitive evolution at first, little more than a realization of the signature which made stone other than wood, and both again different from flesh or bone. The slow immobility of stone, the quick, liquid gushing of water, took on individual characteristics and qualities. Fire, air, earth and water were the elder brethren of humankind, energies to be recognized and greeted with respect, the elementals of life which endowed the earth with power or *wakanda*, as the Sioux Indians called the great mystery of the earth-spirits.

The Foretime was the time for naming and recognition. True naming only comes after true knowing of a thing. While the English language no longer differentiates nouns by gender, many languages distinguish between the maleness or femaleness of things. Before developed concepts of deity, the earth was already understood as

female – the Mother, the bringer-forth, the provider: the sky too was discerned as male – the Father, the rainer, the thunderer, the shiner. The verbal name and the mental image combined to formulate the seeds which would grow into the gods. The ability to bestow names, together with the art of visualization, distinguished the shaman from the tribe. The first stirrings of imagination are perceptible in the ability to ‘have a picture’ in one’s head. William Golding’s *The Inheritors* (89) gives an insight into the consciousness of the Foretime and the way in which perceptions are tentatively shared.

Place was of the utmost importance. The sense of belonging to the land can be clearly understood in the statement of a modern Australian aboriginal woman of the Pitjantjara tribe who said that the moles, warts or skin discolorations on her body were the same as marks left by her ancestors upon a particular rock at her birthplace (169). Although we still acknowledge the place of our birth to be important, still experience the *frisson* of power at a sacred site, or even yearn towards some remote place which we feel is our spiritual home, we can seldom know with any intimacy the network of influences which are set up when one site is continuously occupied over many generations. The natural features of that place take on characteristics friendly to their inhabitants, coalescing into spiritual forces – the *genius loci*, or spirit of the place. The ancient numen of the place can still be encountered at ancient wells, hills and woods today; although few people still make a wish, or tie a prayer rag from a branch, the *genius loci* remains.

The tribe was a unit, an extended family: its common aim was self-maintenance and survival. To be part of the tribe was to be one of the family: to be cast out of it was almost certain death. To be part of the tribe’s customs, laws and privileges was to participate in the group-soul of tribal consciousness. This tribal consciousness was built up over many generations until a group-soul began to operate, comprising a common symbolism and understanding which was upheld by domestic custom and transmitted through traditions of ritual behaviour. Ritual is a method of formalizing and therefore of remembering things, a way of codifying the functions of humanity within a spiritual sphere of reference, so that the deeds and responsibilities of tribal ancestors are transmissible to the tribe. Tribal consciousness is usually concentrated in the here and now, concerned with the body’s magnetic relationship with the earth; tribal rites reflected this obsession in the cult of the severed head, the bones of the ancestors and the blood of sacrifice poured out upon the stones

(33). The recurrent rhythms of life and death were the tribal reality, and these are the bases from which stem those ancient historical or religious promptings which still sway our opinions today. The early encodings of tribal ritual are with us yet, sometimes enshrining irrational and aberrant beliefs, at other times giving us access to the group-soul of our people and their potent wisdom. Because these rituals are based in earth it might be easy to deride their efficacy for our own time but we must remember that ‘The heavy matter through which we move is not the antithesis of cosmic consciousness but its densest and most inert expression’ (216). The first stirrings of consciousness often appear crude and barbaric but, *within the context of their times*, they are valid signs of a people attempting to relate to the hidden realities behind appearances; they are the foundations of religion.

For the time of which we are speaking the word ‘religion’ is a misnomer; yet some explanation of the term ‘Old Religion’ is necessary. It is a term normally used in totally diverse contexts, applied by members of opposing camps about their own antecedents: by the Catholic Church about itself after the Reformation in countries where Catholicism was outlawed, in order to differentiate it from Protestantism, and also by present-day witches about their own ancestral beliefs. We shall be discussing both of these factors in due course, but in the context of this book the ‘Old Religion’ applies to the earliest form of native belief. It covers the vast period from the Foretime right up to and including the beliefs of the Celts, who welded their own practices onto the older native patterns.

Such is the welter and variety inherent in the Old Religion that we cannot trace every single factor in its make-up. In its earliest form it was not a religion, as we understand it, at all; more a way of living with intention than a formal expression of worship. Some notion of this can be grasped by looking to the traditional sayings and prayers from the islands and Highlands of Scotland collected by Alexander Carmichael in the *Carmina Gadelica* (42). No aspect of life is too humble to be excluded from its own special saying and blessing: from the smooing or subduing of the fire for the night and the blessing of seed-corn for sowing, to the invocation against the evil eye and the charm for travellers.

May the man of this clothing never be wounded,
May he never be scathed,

sings the woman who weaves the cloth on her loom, aware ever of

the vital interdependence of the animate with the inanimate. The *Carmina Gadelica* was collected in the late nineteenth century, but it gives a clear impression of how too, household gear and weapons participate in their users' lives. Each everyday activity has its particular blessing which cannot be omitted without danger; ongoing work is exhorted with rhymes and songs to help its continuance; and the protection of saints, angels and fairies is still sought. Places of accidental or violent death have their memorials not in stone but in songs of lamentation and sad remembrance. Of the dead themselves, there is little mention because the realms of the living and the dead overlap: the gateway is always open to the world of the ancestors.

We have shown how the first formulations of deity arose from recognition of the *genius loci*: this was the first germination of the god-idea. The second germination stemmed from the cult of the ancestors. The dead were both inhumed and cremated in the Foretime. The preparation for entombment was carried out with the same care and exactitude as though the dead person was to be rehoused. Food and personal equipment were placed in the grave as though death were but another form of living: which was exactly how it was understood. The ancestors were the go-betweens in the Otherworld which was itself a continuation of this world. The ancestors were those who had gone before. In life they had helped establish the fundamental shape of tribal existence by being links in the chain of tradition, by transmitting the tribal wisdom. Reverence for the ancestors is by no means extinct today. The great festivals of the dead are still celebrated in South America where candles are placed over ancestral graves, as in other parts of the world where it is usual to tell news of one's family to the deceased (34). The deeds of the ancestors were related in the Foretime and transmitted to the next generation, often growing in stature until the distant ancestor resembled a god. Sometimes these retellings show how the behaviour of the ancestors helped to codify tribal laws and precedents. The Irish *Book of Invasions*, which chronicles the history of successive invasions, sets many such precedents: the *first* adultery, the *first* fire to be kindled, the *first* fair to be assembled – these are all activities in which the ancestors participated in the tribe's distant past, memories encapsulated and sung (136). In these early tales the ancestors seldom figure in stories of happy family life, but in violent dissertations of chaotic relationships and bloody slaughters. Similarly in the Welsh *Triads*, bardic mnemonics in which the ancestors and their deeds are celebrated in triplicities, we read of the three famous

shoemakers, the three amazons of Britain, and the three unfortunate assassinations (268). Here are the yardsticks and comparisons of the tribe by which they shared in the mythical exploits of the dead-who-did-not-die.

While everyone had ancestors to contact and aid them, it required a specialized member of the tribe to interpret the realities of the Otherworld. It is in the person of the shaman, the priest, the walker-between-the-worlds that we find the third germination of the god-idea and a beginning of formal religious practice.

WALKERS-BETWEEN-THE-WORLDS

While every one of us is an 'earth-walker' only certain people can perform the shamanic function: these are the psychics, the sensitives, the mystics and dreamers. In our society we exclude such people from the circle of community life out of fear or ignorance: for us, they have no useful purpose. Yet a tribe without a shaman was a tribe without a spiritual representative.

The shamans were the first guardians of the Western Way, the first keepers of tradition. Although the word 'shaman' belongs properly to Siberia, it is more applicable within the Old Religion than witch, magician, or priest, for the shaman or shamanka fulfilled many roles: lore-keeper, healer, prophet, diviner, ceremonialist as well as ambassador to and interpreter of the gods. A shaman was born, not made. But only a shaman could train or guide another. The candidate-shaman would meet the ancestors or the tribal totem for the first time in the vision-quest, an interior journey in which an otherworldly protector or teacher would be encountered. This initiation was undertaken in an isolated place where the candidate would stay, often near death from the ordeals of fasting or self-mutilation by blood-letting, to make the first encounter with Otherworld realities. If successful, the initiate would return to the tribe and be inaugurated into the shamanic function by the elders (134).

The shaman was literally a walker-between-the-worlds, one whose attunement to both tribal consciousness and the gods was so fine that he or she could slip between the hidden parallels of life and death, between this world and the Otherworld; the shaman affected the quality of the group-soul on levels not immediately appreciable to normal consciousness. We can instance those mystics of many religions, the Christian St John of the Cross, the Jewish Nahman of

Bratislav and the Islamic Rumi – who by their silent witness and intimate contact with the inner forces of their faiths, carried the religious group-soul forward by intensive meditation upon the images and symbols inherent in their religions in such a way as to make them strongly evocative for others. The shaman's role was even more crucial because his or her personal revelation shaped the tribal consciousness, formulated and named the gods.

This special and sacred awareness of the universe is codified in song and chant, poetry and tale, carving and painting . . . it gives structure and coherence to the unfathomable and intangible. By 'making' that which is the unknown, the shaman attains some degree of control over the awesome forces of the *mysterium* (100).

It was upon the shaman's revelation and visualization that the Old Religion was built and from which, ultimately, subsequent god-forms and spiritual practices are derived.

While tribal members had only a vague notion of the threshold dividing the worlds, the shaman could not only divine, through observation of wood, stone and elemental forces, but was also supremely sensitive to the will of the ancestors, the first gods. The first stories of the gods arose from a weaving of the relationships between one inner-world energy with another.

The shaman was also the guardian of the tribe's luck or totemistic symbol, similarly bound up with the ancestors. Certain Highland clan-chiefs today retain their clan's luck: the Macleods possess the Fairy Flag – an Otherworldly banner with the power of protecting the clan from peril (171). The form of the tribal totem varied: if the tribe took its dependence from an animal, an animal skin or horn might be worn by the shaman in great ceremonies. Or it might take the form of stone or implement to be wielded as an emblem of office by either shaman or tribal ruler. The stories attached to the tribe's luck were bound up with the first beginnings of the tribe itself, and these can often be traced within the genealogies of certain families. In the Foretime, the shaman was responsible for the esoteric ordering of the tribe, the tribal ruler with its exoteric governance. Sometimes the function of shaman and ruler were combined in one person or family, which led to a close identification of that family with Otherworldly entities or with the gods.

Kings were descended in legend from gods: the peace-kings of Sweden from Freya, the Saxons from Woden (136) and the Emperors

of Japan from the sun-goddess, Amaterasu; while others might be descended from animals, like the Macfies who are descended from a seal-woman, or the French Lusignan line, whose later descendants became kings of Jerusalem during the Crusades, from Melusine, a water-goddess or mermaid (70). In some senses the shaman was also an early form of herald, bearing the arms or symbols of his tribe on their behalf. 'Arms represent people or groups of people as though they themselves were present. The presence of a coat of arms acts as a substitute for the person, *even after his death*' (171 italics ours). Since we are all intimately related through a handful of common ancestors we each, by virtue of our blood-link, have some share in a tribal symbol. Although we may not be eligible to bear arms, certain symbols or mascot-images crop up everywhere and are particular to us. The animal 'familiar' of the witch is of this category, as is the teddy-bear or tribal symbol is given on p. 42. Such clan-totems are still powerful which belong to us, and a technique for establishing such a shamanic or tribal symbol is given on p. 000. Such clan-totems are still powerful keys when walking the Western Way, being releasers of memory.

The shaman was not just the spiritual representative or herald of the tribe, but also its memory. The shaman's journeying between the worlds gave him or her a familiarity with two realities. It is with this interior reality that we have lost contact. Most of us have lost the facility of entering into the Otherworld, but it is still the province of poets, priests and initiates both in the Western Way and in other areas. The process of *analepsis* or the remembrance and recovery of 'forgotten' knowledge is skilfully discussed by Robert Graves in chapter 19 of *The White Goddess* (92). *Analepsis* is a technique everywhere used by poets, historians and mediums, as well as others: that it is little written about is not surprising. It is an inheritance available to all who stand in the line of succession from our shamanic ancestors, as we shall hope to show. Two examples will serve to show how it functions. In this century one James Fraser, a cartwright in Beaulieu, told of a recurring dream in which he witnessed the Battle of Blar-na-Leine in such detail that the hearer was in no doubt as to the accuracy of his account. The battle in question had occurred in 1544 when nearly all the Frasers were killed fighting the Clanranald: James Fraser told of his dream just after the Second World War. His description of contemporary dress, equipment and methods of fighting could only be checked by recourse to obscure sources unavailable to the dreamer (171). If one of James Fraser's ancestors had survived that battle, could this be some form of hereditary memory?

Many theories have been put forward to explain this phenomenon, such as Jung's theory of the collective unconscious (123), reincarnational memory (107), or access to the ancestors (238). Each of these theories is using an idiosyncratic metaphor for a single understanding. If we understand the Otherworld as a reality which is always available because continuously happening, not subject to linear time, we begin to see how analepsis may be one of the keys into the Western Dreamtime. A technique for developing far-memory is given on p. 44. A second example of analepsis concerns Alfred Watkins, the developer of the ley-line theory, who spoke of an experience he had in which he was beset by a 'flood of ancestral memory' when he 'saw' ley-lines for the first time, etched upon the countryside (281). Such sudden memory-recall is deeply gratifying because an ancient facet of our tradition can be retrieved by those means to enlighten our own age. Whatever metaphor we employ to speak about analepsis – whether it be 'communications from beyond the grave' or 'from out of space' rather than the ancestors or the Otherworld – we each possess the means to use it for ourselves.

Nothing is ever truly lost, and this is the joy of the Western Way: that recurrent themes crop up in a seemingly isolated way in individuals and, when synthesized, form a body of knowledge which has lain forgotten for centuries. The shaman ensured that such knowledge was not left to chance: each tribal member's initiation into adulthood was a lesser version of the shaman's own Vision-quest – an introduction to the symbols and totems of the tribe – where the candidate would be left alone and fasting in order to bring back a vision or, as we would say, a visualization, by means of an unconditioned response. Initiation into arcane knowledge is now the protectorate of the Examining Boards of universities who still incarcerate their candidates for a certain period of time in which the required response is sought, though this method is itself a shadow of an older form of lengthy training and memory testing. For these methods of enabling the initiate to remember lost knowledge was the preserve of the shaman's successors – the Druids.

First of all dismiss from your mind the image of bearded, white-robed druids, sickles in hand, trooping off to a druidic conference. So has popular imagination been conditioned by the druid-revivalists of the last few centuries. That the true image is in keeping with the Foretime shamans we can well see if we look at the Irish *Book of Invasions* (136). Here we read how one chief druid, Mide, kindled the first fire upon the hill of Uisnech at which the 'indigenous druids'

complained bitterly, because he was usurping their function. Mide then had them brought together and had their tongues cut out, buried the tongues on Uisnech and then sat upon them: a suitable parable demonstrating the power struggle between the old and new shaman, and how the old ones' powers and knowledge were appropriated by the new.

The druids did not just arrive fully fledged with the Celtic invasions then, but shared the function and position of the old shamans. As links in the chain of succession, the druids were the strongest guardians of the Western Way. Yet even in the Classical accounts of druidism they do not constitute a priesthood as we understand it today. The accounts of Strabo, Caesar and Tacitus (37, 255) give us a slanted view of a society which was at odds with Rome, but none of these witnesses are concerned with the religious character of a priesthood so much as with the political threat posed by druidic powers of council. Parallels have been pointed between the class structure of Classical India and that of the Celts (20). Druids and kings were brahmins, aristocrats of Celtic society, following the usual association between the ruling and priestly clans. A druid ranked above a king, and was attached to the court as both shaman and learned divine, being adviser, teacher and prophet in one.

The Romans sought to extirpate druidism yet, ever mindful of a land's *genius loci* and its gods, they retained the native god-forms for their own use and encouraged the overt similarities between native and Roman deities – just as, five centuries later, Pope Gregory the Great was to advise missionaries to convert old sites to Christian worship in accordance with the locally established *genius loci* and its interpenetrating geodetic axes (216 and see Chapter 2). The power of the aristocratic shaman may have been crushed or temporarily diverted during the Roman occupation, but Rome did not succeed in suppressing the group-soul of the people, nor did it quell their systems of law-giving – as established by the druids. Nor did Rome ever penetrate to or conquer Ireland: here druidism remained intact as the ancient literature shows us.

In one tale, Mog Ruith, a West Munster druid, dons a bulls hide and the *enchennach*, or bird-dress, and soars above the heads of the opposing army to bring back details of their troop's disposition – clearly an early example of astral flight. His dress is the standard shamanic one for such activities. The King of Ulster's druid, Fingen, looks at people's illnesses and injuries and gives them remedies (160). In the *Táin bó Cuailnge* (256) the royal woman Nes asks

Cathbad, a passing druid, 'What action is auspicious for this hour?' 'It is good for getting a king on a queen', he prophesies. Seeing no other male handy, she takes him to bed with her on the spot. Here we have mention of shaman, healer and prophet. Besides these, the druids exercised the functions of judge, administrator and philosopher. While Continental druidism may have developed differently, we begin to see that the role of shaman is subject to specialization within druidism. No 'colleges of druidism' emerge from the evidence. Although children were sent to the druid to be fostered by his wife and raised with his children to be taught his craft, the household would have resembled a later Culdee foundation more than a high-powered assembly of druids.

We are told that Ireland liked Christianity so well that it converted quietly and without fuss. Conversely, Christianity adapted itself so well to the druidic elements that they were accepted without question. As the missionaries of Ireland set out to convert Scotland, Wales and Northern England, druidism was further reinforced under the sign of the new faith, giving Celtic Christianity its own distinct flavour: that of Native Tradition Christianity. At the coming of Christianity in Ireland many of the specifically non-religious druidic functions devolved upon the poets. Poet is the correct term – a bard was a much less noble person, having only half the worth under law of a poet.

Instead of an all-purpose shaman then, there came to be a number of specializing experts: the *brehon*, or judge; the *seanchai*, or professional storyteller, historian and genealogist; and the poet or *file*, who had the equivalent of a small library in his head. The degrees of knowledge were marked by the equivalent to our degrees of bachelor, master and doctor in modern universities. Each of these learned men and women shared the shamanic function of walker-between-the-worlds, being concerned with the passing on of traditional knowledge and deep learning; but of them all the poet retained both the shamanic and druidic ability best (121).

Throughout the corpus of Celtic literature we come across poems which boast the impossible. The Irish Amaigen says,

I am a sunbeam
I am a skilful sailor
I am a cruel boar
I am a lake in the valley (160).

Likewise, Taliesin, the Welsh poet-priest, says:

I have borne the banner before Alexander . . .
I was at the place of the crucifixion of the merciful Son of God . . .
I have been in the firmament with Mary Magdalene . . .
I shall be until the day of doom on the face of the earth (146).

In these boasts we see the seeds of analeptic memory at work, remembrances of other lives, times and places, as well as an intimate acquaintance with the nature of the Otherworld. These boasts indicate knowledge gained in initiatory rites: the seed-ideas and essences of knowledge hidden within esoteric poetic utterance. These poems are often intense compressions of symbolic concepts which enter the understanding of the hearer with the penetration of an invisible arrow into its target.

The poetic training was long and arduous, lasting at least twelve years during which time the candidate was expected to memorize the history of the race, the genealogies of kings, secret languages, the complexities of metre and prosody as well as the laws and customs of the people. A poem is never made up, it is extracted from the Otherworld by the inner journey there; it is the result of personal experience – of being one with the nature of a bird or fish, of sharing the revelation of a hero or god. The poet's initiation, like that of the shaman, is indeed a journey through the maze where the mysteries met upon the way are codified and assimilated into the initiate. Like Taliesin, whose words are quoted above, the Irish Tuan mac Cairell (160) experiences successive transformations into a deer, boar, eagle and then a salmon when he is eaten by the wife of King Cairell and reborn of her. Tuan is the sole survivor of the invasion of Partholon and is able to chronicle the events of passing generations for the benefit of later ages. By both reincarnation and memory, Tuan survives. And, though we are merely 'earth-walkers', with training we may yet succeed to the heritage stored up for us by the walkers-between-the-worlds.

Druids and poets were polymaths as great as any living during the Renaissance. Indeed, their reputations are greater considering that they memorized their learning without reference to either books or writing. Our modern aids – the tape recorder, video and notebook – are useful, but they have left us with lazy brains. Yet it is still possible to hone our senses and mental faculties, if not to razor-sharp druid standard, at least to a greater awareness of the Western Way and its treasures. The use of the creative imagination and the cultivation of

analeptic recall can put us in touch with the mysteries which are our heritage. Though the role of shaman, druid and priest are scarcely recognizable in our society, the need for guardians of the mysteries is still with us. Now more than ever when the links are tenuous, do we need to become walkers-between-the-worlds, ourselves finding the way over the threshold and reinterpreting the mysteries we find there. Though there are no longer shamans or elders to initiate us into these mysteries today, we have given one very old method on p. 128, which will give you access to the Otherworld and your own vision-quest.

MYSTERIES AND INITIATION

Mysteries are gateways, thresholds between this world and the Other, the meeting place of gods and people. As symbolic verities they appear removed from the mundane world, difficult for the uninitiated to approach: from the viewpoint of the Otherworld, mysteries are a language in which spiritual concepts can be communicated and stored. Just as the Christian Eucharist uses the mundane elements of bread and wine to express the presence of Christ, so did the Foretime share and experience the Otherworld realities by means of mundane signs and by ritual enactments of the incommunicable mystery. An oak-tree was a tree, but also the indwelling god of the forest, a totem of the Green Man. When the tribal ruler dressed himself in oak-leaves he became the living embodiment of the god himself (272).

The word 'mystery' comes from the Greek *myein*, to keep silent. The overtones of secrecy and elitism attached to mysteries have alienated many who approach the Western Way for the first time, but, just as a family excludes outsiders from the intimate family circle however hospitable it may be to strangers, so does the group-soul require its own mysteries and their guardians. Entering the mysteries is to participate in the nature of the gods.

The Altaic shaman describes his or her adventures through the ecstatic and theatric action of trance. He or she physically performs the journey while undertaking it on the spiritual plane. The interior state is revealed, made known, and then ultimately exorcized through performance. The venerated images of the awakened psyche are communicated as living symbols in the process of inner spiritual transformation (100).

These mysteries cannot be arbitrarily open to all, if only for the sake of individual safety: they must be guarded and communicated with caution. Even for those born into the tribe, initiation into the mysteries was an earned privilege not an automatic right: one won by suffering, sacrifice and ordeal. But the real secret about the mysteries is that *they cannot be communicated by one being to another*: the mystery-guardian can only give guidelines and keys to knowledge, not the actual knowledge itself, which is revealed to the initiate *by personal experience and revelatory realisation*. The impact of participating in the mysteries has been largely discounted today by those who now appreciate them intellectually and are virtually symbolically illiterate, but to one who stood revealed to the personified energies of the gods and naked to the group-soul of the ancestors, the experience was terrifyingly unforgettable and deeply nourishing.

As the mysteries formalized so did a structured priesthood emerge to guard and dispense the keys to their teaching. We shall be speaking further about the development and work of the mystery schools in volume 2. The survival of the native shaman and shamanka will be dealt with in chapter 5 of this volume. The ritual means of the mysteries tended to fall into a three-fold pattern: personal, seasonal and tribal.

The personal rituals were concerned with rites of passage: with birth, life and death. The three stages of life were connected closely to the Otherworld, and each was marked by a ritual of initiation to indicate the transition from one state to the next, as the subject died to the old and was born to the new. Just as the new-born has to find its way in the coils of the worldly labyrinth, so does the newly-deceased have to find its way through the unremembered mazes of the Otherworld. In our own society we have no formalized rites of passage to ease the young into life and the old out of it into the wider world of the inner spaces.

Initiation does not necessarily confer great powers or show how knowledge is to be used: it is merely the implantation of a seed which life's experiences will help germinate, depending on the resources of the initiate. It stimulates the latent potential of the candidate, enabling him or her to share in the patterns of life at deeper levels than that of surface awareness. Because a new-born child had but recently come from the Otherworld its grip on this world's reality was weak: it might be stolen away or return there again. Hence it was

protected by salt and iron – two substances inimical to the Otherworld (see chapter 4). Rituals were performed on the baby's behalf: a tree might be planted to link the life of the child with that of the earth (164). Charms were recited over the child and talismans tied about its neck. The shaman might prophesy the child's life-pattern and bind some *geasa* or prohibition upon it, forbidding it to kill or eat certain totemistic animals.

This pattern was reinforced by initiation at puberty – a time when everyone stands on the threshold of the worlds and is sensitive to the Otherworld energies – when the childhood personality was set aside in order to make way for the new responsible member of the tribe. In many parts of the world today where tribal consciousness is analogous to the Foretime, the women still ritually weep in token of their children's 'death' as the young candidates are led away to suffer the ordeal which will make them adult: they are kept in seclusion, subject to many prohibitions, they are told the ancestral lore, and suffer circumcision or the painful marking of the flesh with ritual tattoos and scars, preparatory to their appearance at the ceremony in which they will re-enact the mysteries of the gods (34). In a ceremony parallel to, if not as testing as, the shaman's vision quest, the initiate was often left among the tombs of the ancestors, in caves or chambered tombs which signified the descent to the Underworld. It was a daring step across the threshold of the worlds: a dangerous journey, the return from which was greeted with joy, signifying as it did the emergence of a new adult tribal member.

Although the keys to the mysteries are given to the initiate of the Western Way, each must still find the way in darkness by the light of personal intuition. To enter the chambered passages and caves of ancient initiation scenes today can still be a revelation: to grope in the labyrinthine darkness and find the finger holds and ledges once grasped by earlier initiates of the Western Way. But suffering and pain are only one feature: at the heart-chamber of the maze-mystery is freedom and mastery over the elements of life.

The pattern was shattered at death: the body was left to disintegrate in the air before burial, or it was burned and the ashes placed in an urn. The deceased's gear was sometimes smashed to indicate that it was, henceforth, relegated to Otherworld use (33). Chants were sung to help the spirit's transition to the ancestral realm. Death was but a threshold between the worlds and was not feared as it is today.

The seasonal rituals were concerned with the cultivation of the

land and the interdependence of animals and people with the elements. Modern farming methods, the importing of foreign food and the deep freeze have severed us from our dependence upon seasonal changes for our daily bread – though this is still a determining factor between plenty and starvation in the Third World. The fertilization of the soil, winter sowing, lambing, spring sowing, cultivation and harvest followed each other in a constant round of activity in which the whole tribe shared. The lunar and agricultural calendar can still be discerned in the later Celtic Fire-Festivals of Samhain, Imbolc, Bealtaine and Lunasadh, celebrated on the eves of 1 November, 1 February, 1 May and 1 August respectively. These were the times when the Otherworld was felt to be particularly close. We have given suggestions on p. 47 in which these festivals are revealed as the hidden doorways through which we can still pass. They are still recognizable to most of us as All Souls, the Purification of the Virgin, May Day and Lammas – days when traditionally either priest or people still celebrate the mysteries. The solar calendrical days are retained by universities and lawcourts as times of sittings and circuits – an inheritance from druidic practice: the equinoxes, 21 March (Lady Day) and 21 September (Michaelmas), as well as the solstices, 21 June (Midsummer) and 21 December (Midwinter) were important in the Foretime, as research among standing-stones, circles and earth-works shows us (29).

Of all the rituals from the Foretime, those relating to the seasons are most approachable, combining as they do both high mystery and tribal enjoyment (94). They are still a good excuse to stagger, as a modern folksong has it,

from the Old Half Moon to the Rising Sun,
with our pint-pots in our hands (298).

Something of the communal celebration and joy of life can be captured if we participate in the surviving seasonal rituals enacted today; though often overlaid with later obscurity, they stir deep-seated memories offering us access to the Foretime.

The tribal rituals involved the whole clan in great ceremonial assemblies; the secular side of these gatherings was celebrated with games, music and dancing but, whether they were held to enact the god-stories or to inaugurate a new leader, they served to reinforce the group-soul. Something of this feeling of communal cohesion can be seen in modern Highland Clan gatherings in Scotland. Dame Flora MacLeod of MacLeod has spoken of the bond of affection and

obligation which she and her clan owe to each other which 'in all the airts of the world is indeed a living tie that neither mountains nor a waste of seas can divide . . . the spiritual link of clanship embraces them all' (171). And however blasé we may be about our own national cohesion, the coronation of a monarch is still an event surrounded by numinous awe, bridging the ages with its pageantry, the exhibition of heraldic totems, the exchange of promises, and the rituals which marry the sovereign to the land – in the case of the English monarch, with the Wedding Ring of England – a potent and ancient ritual (16). The inauguration of a president, although a diminished form of the royal ritual, shares the status of a great tribal event: in some parts of the world the rivalry and competition for the honour is analogous to that of the Foretime when rival chieftains fought each other in deeds of arms for the privilege of becoming tribal leader.

In the modern coronation rite many early ritual practices are enshrined, but this marriage to the land is the most fundamentally important. The tribe had its being from the earth which bore it; the king, as chief representative of the tribe, had therefore to have a closer link with the earth energies. We have said how the first formulations of deity began; in many parts of the West the *genius loci* became personified as the Sovereignty of the land, seen as a royal queen of great bounty who either symbolically, or in the person of the shamanka, was married to the king. She was the mother of the people, and the king was her consort-steward. He administered the land in her gift and by her right (149).

But while the king aged, Sovereignty did not; if his vigour did not equal hers, the king was replaced, often undergoing voluntary death to become an ancestral guardian (248). Here the kingly and priestly roles overlapped. The union with the land was ruptured if the king was maimed or blemished – a feature which we find of importance within the Grail Legends, as noted in essay six of *At the Table of the Grail* (162). A wounded king meant a wasted land: the obligation upon the king to be sacrificed was very great. In terms of the Western Way this spiritual concept is important today: only by the close meshing of people, shaman and ruler with the earth can it achieve its fulfilment and the people themselves be made whole (see exercise 5, p. 70).

The place of the king-making was often an ancestral place. The kings of Argyll were inaugurated by stepping onto the royal footprint graven into the rock at the hill of Dunadd: literally stepping in

the footstep of the ancestors. The stealing of the Stone of Scone – the ancestral inauguration stone of the Kings of Scotland, and said by some to be the ancient Irish Lia Fail – by Edward I in 1296 was an attempt to purloin the sovereignty of Scotland. Its illicit return from Westminster Abbey's Coronation Chair in 1951 to Scotland was greeted with shrieks of fury south of the border and cries of glee in the north: a people does not give up its native heritage very quickly, but the sacred stone was returned in time for the inauguration of Queen Elizabeth II, the lineal successor to the Scottish kingship (16).

Loyalty to the racial archetypes and ancestral patterns is still very deeply seated within us. The domestic propitiations, the seasonal rituals, the ancestors and their power remain. These are the roots of the Old Religion, of which a few leaves from the traditional family tree can still be seen today. By themselves they are powerful, but without the inspiring of their history they are nothing.

It is to the racial symbols of our Native Tradition, its archetypes and myths, that we must look as living scions of that tree, and beyond them to the god-forms. The surest way to approach them is through the sacred sites and temples of the old earth magic.

EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1 FINDING YOUR CLAN TOTEM

In the Western Way it is usual for the practitioner to adopt some motto, device or secret name. Just as candidates for confirmation or the monastic life still take another name – be it of saint or ancestor – so do initiates take a new name for their wayfaring. Names are easy to find. Symbols can be acquired. But the clan totem is a symbol of your belonging to the family: those who have followed the Western Way before you. As the number of people alive in the world only thirty generations back is theoretically exceeded by the number of ancestors we each have, counting our two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, etc., to a total of 1,073,741,904, we are therefore intimately related one to the other and share a common set of ancestors (62). These ancestral families had their unique clan totem or symbol which, by right of blood, we share. Your family may already be privileged to bear arms of its own, in which case you have a ready-made heraldic totem. But most of us cannot trace our genealogies with any certitude; we have no knowledge of what this totem might be.

This method bypasses rational knowledge, using sleep as a way of learning things which are not consciously knowable. The ancients used incubation or temple-sleep to help cure sickness of mind and body, as well as helping the client to solve a deep-rooted problem (197). Sleep transports us to the Otherworld very speedily and it is here that we shall find what we seek.

Lie down on the floor with a cushion for your head if you attempt this technique during the day or you don't want to stay asleep too long. Otherwise you can go to bed as normal at night. Curl up on your right side and repeat the entry chant (see Notes on Techniques p. 16) over and over in your head. Feel yourself getting heavier and heavier until you experience the pleasant sensation of slowly sinking through the floor or bed. Visualize yourself sinking gently through the layers until you reach the earth and carry on down. You are descending the trunk of your family tree, inside its bole, like Alice down the rabbit-hole. Sink as far as you are able until you reach the

bottom of the trunk. Don't be frightened of going too far; you land gently at the bottom, stand up and pass through the trunk in which a door is clearly seen.

At this point you may already have fallen asleep, but don't worry; practice makes perfect. On the trunk at your eye-level is the totem or symbol you are looking for. (You may have been aware of seeing other symbols as you fell down the tunnel of the tree's inside, but these are not the ones you are looking for.) Your family tree towers above you, its branches disappearing into the far distance of the heavens: it is green in leaf and the trunk is a living thing, full of the vital sap which it draws from the green earth about it. Don't walk about exploring, though. Look carefully at the symbol on the tree and make the strong intention of bringing it back in your remembrance.

If you are doing this during the day, now is the time to return, by the way you came. Few people can achieve this kind of light sleep-consciousness, however. Most of us will find that we wake in our beds the next morning with little or no remembrance at all. Don't be deterred, keep practising. As with a dream, you may find that the day's activities will 'break' your remembrance free of its fetters. The symbol can remain a long time in the psyche until it is recognized, but you will begin to notice the continuous recurrence of a theme or image which will push itself forward into your notice. Don't dismiss the trivial or the bizarre – you may not yet have sorted out the finer points – for the brain often stores things in a kind of symbolic shorthand. If you keep getting a kettle, say, then a kettle it probably is: perhaps a cauldron translated into modern imagery. The cauldron would make a good clan symbol as it cooked the tribe's food and it is still called a kettle in some parts of England today – as in 'a kettle of fish' – a pot which hangs over the fire. It is the ancestor of the Grail symbol itself – a host of imagery lies hidden here. Likewise you may suddenly realize that the neighbourhood dogs have started to take a friendly interest in you and congregate when you appear in the street – could it be that a dog is your clan symbol?

You may be fearful in this first exercise of deceiving yourself and making things up. At first it is difficult to tell when you are 'seeing' an image and when you are consciously 'pushing' it to be there. Only experience will teach you the difference and, when you come to work with the symbols which have arisen, you will know if this is so because the symbol should have that same pulsing vitality as the trunk of the tree had: if it feels lifeless in your hands, then try this

technique again with more discernment. Check back on the tree itself to see if this is right.

How will you use the symbol when you have it? On your journeys to the Otherworld it is your call-sign, your passport and recognition symbol which has been brought from the very root of the Western tree of tradition. It can guide you back if you get confused, and has power to grant you certain 'clearances' when you meet difficulties. You can use it visually as a meditational device in itself by painting, drawing or embroidering it and thus making it yours by recreating it in this world. The clan totem is your symbol of belonging and when you work under its aegis you are directly in touch with your ancestors who have walked the Western Way before you.

Keep it secret and keep it safe: others have their own devices which belong to them. If someone has the same token as yourself, this may indicate a deep link between you. We belong to the human race as well as to our clan, so don't let the symbol divide you from your human fellowship with those on whose behalf you tread these paths: for if you cannot apply what you learn in these pages to your own condition, the path you walk is a dead end.

EXERCISE 2 ANALEPTIC MEMORY

The first time you perform this exercise, enter your family tree as in exercise one, only, instead of stepping out where the trunk meets the ground, carry on down the tree through its mighty roots and emerge, underground, among the roots of the tree. A clear pathway is before you: follow it until it opens up into an underground cavern where a large lake is found. On the left-hand side is a wellspring and beside it a whitened, rotted tree-stump. You do not wish to drink of these waters which flow away from the lake into the ground, for these are the waters of forgetfulness. On the right-hand side of the lake is another wellspring which feeds the lake. Behind this wellspring, which is the well of memory, stand the Guardians. As you meditate, these Guardians will formulate themselves in your imagination; they are different for everyone. You have come here in order to retrieve the memory of something you have either lost or which has not been accessible to you in this life; perhaps for many centuries this knowledge has not been available. Whatever you seek to know and remember, be sure you have properly formulated it beforehand, for when you face the Guardians they will require a clear request or

mental image from you. If your request is one of idle curiosity you may be denied: but worse still, you may be permitted to remember or know. You will forever afterwards have responsibility for that knowledge.

Approach the well of memory. You will not be given to drink unless you speak the following password:

I am a child of Earth and of the Otherworld,
But my race is of Heaven alone.
I thirst for the living waters.
In the name of the three worlds,
Give me to drink of the well of memory.

The Guardians will dip a crystal cup into the waters of the well where they spring from the rock and give it you to drink. Although it is only spring water you are drinking its coldness and clarity sparkle in your veins like iced wine . . .

At this point you have a choice. You can remain seated in meditation, quietly absorbing the draught through your being and examining the thoughts and images which rise in connection with your request. Or you can go to sleep, as you did in the first exercise, allowing the images to arise in your dreams. Either way is effective. At first you may get no clear results from either method but, as we have already said, these exercises often work in circuitous ways. There may be no flash of revelatory awareness so much as a quiet rising intuition which pushes at the back of your thoughts waiting to be perceived.

What happens when you get results? Knowledge which remains theoretical is no use to anyone. Analeptic memory of arcane and abstruse matters is likewise worthless if it goes no further than mere possession of facts. Don't keep drinking from the well of memory retrieving further information which will lie unused or you might as well have drunk from the well of forgetfulness. Whatever you have been given you have been made guardian of and therefore you are responsible for its keeping and dissemination. Some memories will be personal while others may be teachings applicable to many. Continue to meditate on the uses of these memories and their actual usefulness in everyday life. Rather than bothering experts with your astounding findings about how our ancestors lived or what reincarnations you may have had, do researches of your own, following up what little evidence there may be. If you use this exercise as a means of past-life retrieval be ready for the results which can sometimes

have a shocking effect as the full flood of memory releases all kinds of pain and emotional trauma. Memory can be excessively painful, but it can also be used as a positive means for identifying current life problems. Avoidance of certain life-lessons which recur is a refusal to grow. We may not drink of the waters of forgetfulness while we are in manifestation: these waters are for the dead who die to Middle Earth and are reborn into the Otherworld – they need to forget the world of physical reality in order to progress in their new world. We should not forget that when we are born of our physical mother we also ‘die’ to the Otherworld: when we die physically we are being born into the Otherworld.

This is not an exercise which ought to be repeated often. If you get no results after about two weeks, leave it alone for a few months before trying again. Analeptic recall is not easy for some people. More importantly, do not use the period your body needs for rest and sleep as a springboard for psychic experience or experimentation every night. Your sleep patterns will become disturbed if they are being constantly interrupted by a pre-programmed exercise. If you are already interested in the Western Way it is likely that your training has already begun under the aegis of sleep: you will be aware of places which you visit often in dreams, or certain sorts of instruction which are imparted. The fact that little or no remembrance of this teaching rises to the surface of consciousness is not important. The exercises in this book are not graded in any way but some may stimulate remembrance and others will give shape and purpose to vague longings which are seldom pursued, because they remain unrecognized at the subconscious level.

It is not necessary to take this journey right from the beginning when once you know your way about. Simply visualize the lake before you and the two wells and take it from there. Those who know their Classics may well recognize this landscape as part of the mystery instruction given to Orphic initiates: we have adapted it hardly at all, for it is part of the native underworld tradition in another guise. The well of knowledge appears again in the Celtic Otherworld tradition, sometimes as a well, sometimes as a cauldron or Grail. But the underground waters of this exercise are the same waters which our ancestors drank, bubbling up from the roots of the earth.

EXERCISE 3 THE FESTIVALS AS HIDDEN DOORWAYS

The native seasonal festivals are popularly seen as excuses for nothing more than indulgence in quaint folk-custom and rural junketing, but the exoteric celebrations hide the fact that they can be approached on a deeper level. It is not within the scope of this book to give exhaustive lists of such festivals, but the following suggestions can be applied to any festival in whatever part of the world you live.

First of all choose your festival and meditate on its inner meaning: is it primarily religious (Christmas, or Pesach, for instance); agricultural (Lammas); solar (the equinoxes and solstices); from primal folk-tradition (Pace-Egging) or historical commemoration (Oak-apple day – commemorating Charles II's hiding in an oak-tree – or Thanksgiving)? Obviously, the historical and commemorative festivals will not have the powerful spiritual force of the others listed, but these can be used to gain helpful insights into the national consciousness. Some celebrations have been given saints as protectors, replacing the old god-forms, such as the patronage of St Brigit at Candlemas; but though the forms change, the inner protective energy remains the same (94).

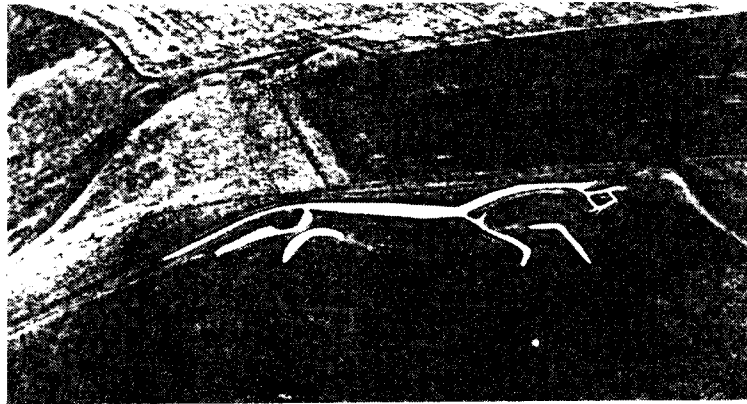
If you have no religious or folk festivals because you follow no particular tradition or because you have made your home in another land, you might do worse than adopt the yearly round of the Celtic calendar which is now celebrated among English-speaking groups throughout the world. Although a festival may be assigned to a particular date, calendrical shift and seasonal inclemency should be taken into account when deciding the right time to celebrate. In inner terms, the right time is more important than the right date. Those living in the Southern hemisphere are already well aware of this.

Choose your festival then, finding out all you can about its origins. Celebrate it exoterically with the kind of rejoicing suitable – with the fruits of harvest or by rising early to greet the midsummer sun – meet with friends, being all the time aware that you are capable of mediating the spiritual energy of this festival to those present as well as to others in your community. This is not by verbal teaching but by deep meditation on the forces involved, by example and inner attention. At the approach to the festival begin to plan and research. At the same time, meditate each day, being aware of the approaching festival, visualizing it as an inner impulse which is striving to be born. Consider the quality of the festival – joyful, reflective, life-giving or

one of gathering-in. Consider your own life in relation to these qualities, freely using the gifts of each festival for your self-development.

In this manner the festivals can indeed become hidden doorways in your life – allowing the influx of inner vitality, fostering sensitivity to the important psychic tides which energize the world. This is the way festivals were always intended to work, but exoteric practice has tended to obscure this purpose. You can make of this exercise what you will – it looks undramatic on paper, but it is applicable to any tradition. Its full effect will be experienced by those who work hardest on it. Festivals are times of rejoicing, yet their origin designates them as holidays, literally, holy-days; not excuses for self-indulgence, but times set aside for physical recreation and spiritual uplifting.

This exercise can also be used in conjunction with other techniques outlined in this book. The festivals are the times when the way to the Otherworld stands open. They are celebrations out of time, subtle demarcations which cut doorways in linear time. They have been hidden for too long. You will learn which times are best for contacting certain forces, for Otherworld visiting, for making a retreat. Everyone makes their own doorways, but while some entrances shift, the festivals themselves remain embedded in our national, religious and folk year ready to be opened by those who know how.



CHAPTER 2

The magic earth

Stand ye in the ways, and see,
and ask for the old paths,
where is the good way,
and walk therein.

Jeremiah: 6:16

Human life was enriched by means of a force activated through the correct geographical relationship of sacred centres.

John Michell: *New View Over Atlantis*

SACRED SPACE

The earth is alive, and because of it there is nowhere that has not been a holy place for someone, for some people. Our proper relationship with the environment is one of complete harmoniousness, though we seldom if ever attain it. This is for a number of reasons: we do not always know *how* to relate to our surroundings; we are too often selfish: we neglect the qualities of life for a quantitative appraisal. But none of this need be so. Our ancestors, the Firstborn, knew better, were skilled in husbanding the power and life-force of the earth. They knew themselves the children of a great mother, a mother whose body they trod upon daily, who nourished and fed and sheltered them as a mother should. With this understanding came a sense of the earth's energies flowing in their own bloodstream; and this gave them a feeling of oneness with the rest of creation, a belief in a vital force which linked all matter in a great rhythm of becoming.

So far in this book we have looked at the first springs of the religious impulse, the reactions of the Firstborn to the world in which they found themselves. In this chapter we shall deal with the earth as something to which we can respond at a personal level. But it is

essential first to understand the nature of the rapport which our ancestors possessed with the great store-house of energy beneath our feet, and why we should be required, as followers of the Western Way, to re-establish that rapport for ourselves.

The land on which we walk is really a great book, in which the history of our race is recorded, layer upon layer, age upon age. Archeology, the scientific investigation of this book, can tell us a great deal about the past and the kind of people who lived there; but there are other ways of reading the book of the land which can open to us the secrets of our ancestors – how they worshipped and where, and perhaps more importantly, who.

To do so we have to reconstruct, within our own minds and with our own imagination, the landscape of the Foretime: filled with strange and frightening things, with a power that could as easily create or destroy – but every part of it uniquely holy.

The image of the earth as mother, producing from her womb not only crops, cattle, men and women, stones, minerals, and forests, but also the knowledge to make all these fruitful and useful, may be considered the dominant symbol in the holy places (3).

It was from this that there grew the idea of the *temenos*, the sacred place where the life-force of the earth's energies was focused, and where those properly trained in the mysteries could, for a time, become one with that vital essence.

This understanding was open to all through the agency of the shamanic priests, whose task it became to guard the collective interior heritage of the tribe. And, to ensure that the holy places could never be desecrated, become forgotten or lost to view, they decreed that the sites should be marked out in such a way that they would always be clearly defined, even though the knowledge of their use died out – as has often been the case.

Certain places, where the life-blood of the planet ran closer to the surface than elsewhere, were already distinguished – at first by no more than lines scratched in the earth, or a few scattered stones placed to indicate the sacred boundaries. But some time in the megalithic period of history they began to be marked out by more permanent signs: stone monoliths, carved and decorated with patterns that, to the initiated, conveyed their sacred function.

Because from the start the circle was a natural shape – evolving from the threshing floor or the site of ritual dancing – the stones were

set out in a circular formation, within the boundaries of which the ground was sacred, set apart from the rest of the earth. Here the people could worship the elemental forces of the living earth, which were to become their gods.

At some time during this period – more than 3000 years ago – when the first stone circles were constructed, their builders discovered that through an exact orientation of different kinds of stone, shaped and cut to a particular design and varying in size and volume, the primal currents of energy within the earth could be tapped, amplified and directed, with equal effect as through trance or vision quest, and that the resulting energy could be drawn upon both individually and collectively. How this realization came about we shall probably never know but, from this moment the stone circles were no longer simply places of worship; they were storehouses of vast and unique energies, which were to fuel the religious and magical activities of mankind for thousands of years, and may indeed still do so today.

Of course, this did not come about overnight. A lengthy period of experimentation followed the initial discovery. Various shapes were tried out, though always the circle was returned to, circles of trees as well as stones being found to be effective in focusing the magic of the earth. 'Sophisticated engineers erected Avebury, the three Stonehenges, the 20,000 barrows and smaller stone circles signalling to a sky thick with gods. Salisbury Plain was . . . embossed with temples, palaces, sprayed with avenues and roads' (273). We can see just how long it took to evolve some kind of fixed pattern from the examples of larger sites such as Stonehenge, where archeological investigation has found evidence of an almost continuous state of growth, extending over a huge span of time, as knowledge of the earth mysteries increased.

The addition of a bank and ditch around the perimeter of the circles helped to seal off the energies within, and the observation and measure of the changing heavens became part of the discipline of the priesthood who worked with the mysteries of the earth.

Great importance was attached to star-lore, as a visible and measurable correlative to daily life. The moon's connection with tides, and with the human cycle of fertility, was recognized, and the passage of the fructifying sun across the sky, with the mystery of its night-time journey, during which it was said to visit the Underworld, was allotted great attention. Sophisticated techniques for measuring and recording the mysteries of the heavens and the way in which they

related to those of the earth gradually evolved into an exact science (29).

The laws governing the lay-out and siting of such holy places and the shaping of the landscape around them is properly called Geomancy, and was once a world-wide discipline. In recent years a great deal of research has been done in this area by writers such as John Michell, Nigel Pennick, Paul Devereux and Paul Screeton, who between them, and with the aid of a legion of known and unknown helpers, have begun to map out the sacred geometry of these islands (168, 195, 66, 227). Many acknowledge an inspirational quality in their work and have described the feelings they experience when walking some ancient trackway between one sacred site and another, as enlightened. They have become subtly aware of links between the holy places, and have been able to plot them with map and compasses in such a way as to allow others to follow their lead, thus extending our knowledge of the sites into an increasingly detailed pattern.

Only recently, with the work of scientists like Alexander Thom (261) and Iuen Mackie (153) has it been possible to see just how accurate these ancient systems of alignment really are. Indeed, many have refused to accept such findings at all. Yet it is now possible to show that there once existed a system of sites linked by countryside paths of energy. From this it is only a small step to believing in a global network, spanning the world in a vast energy grid which connected sites as far apart as Scotland and Australia. Perhaps most extraordinary of all, this seems to have happened more or less independently – and yet one finds the same kind of siting, the same carving of patterns and symbols at sites in America, China, Egypt, Norway and the British Isles (216). It is as though a dream was being shared on a world-wide level, a single impulse rising simultaneously in the consciousness of temple builders in the farthest corners of the globe.

Alfred Watkins, the nineteenth century antiquary who 'rediscovered' the system by which the sacred centres in this country were connected – dubbing them 'ley lines' – spoke of an almost visionary experience in which he saw the landscape revealed in a new light: the hills and tumuli, stone circles and megaliths, connected by shining paths, golden veins standing out amid the green and brown of the land (281). Such visionary glimpses, strongly akin to the analectic thinking of the Foretime, are all a part of the earth mysteries, and often come unbidden to transform the world about us. By following

the shining paths which cross and recross our land, ancient sites long lost to view are being recovered, and we are at last beginning to perceive the overall plan with which our ancestors sought to interpret and later encode the mysteries of the world which surrounded them.

Equally important are the great barrows, the circular and oblong mounds of earth which covered the bones of the sacred ancestors, or which later became caves of initiation and enlightenment where the seeker found entry only after long and arduous tests (238). Carved within, on the stones used to support the weight of the earth, are spiraling patterns and shapes of the maze and its kindred forms – meant to be read and understood by those who penetrated the mysteries – or perhaps by the dead who were laid there. More than 2000 have been excavated in Britain alone, and many more are known to exist. They too are part of the all-embracing pattern, the magical diagram of the life-force, the bloodstream of the earth.

No wanderer in enchanted barrow-land, among those forsaken shrines of dead heroes mightier in their dissolution than in the springtime of their lives, can doubt that such piles of sacred earth were raised of a proud and set purpose to dominate the scenes they do. Our barrows were reared where they could contemplate the world *without and beneath them* and, like the deified lords resting within them, lived in a mid-world between earth and heaven. Seen along the skyline, they are indeed the stepping-stones of the Gods (161, our italics).

Nor are these death-houses, or the stone avenues built on alignments of sun, moon and stars, the only such stepping stones. Even greater arrangements of terrestrial geography are believed to exist.

At Glastonbury in Somerset recent research has detected the presence of a vast terrestrial maze coiling about the Tor which has, together with the land about it, been called 'this holiest earth' (7, 211). Others, notably the Elizabethan magus John Dee (65) and latterly Katherine Maltwood (159) in the 1930s, have detected the outlines of a vast zodiac laid out in the landscape around Glastonbury. Whether this is actually present, or a memory of older mysteries, remains a vexed question. There are now some half-dozen projected zodiacs under investigation, and more will doubtless be uncovered in the future (290). The second exercise at the end of this chapter is designed to offer an exploratory voyage which can be adapted to fit other sites of similar provenance; it also asserts the

importance of the Arthurian impulse, which can be seen as the latest example of the rising of earth energy, combined with the racial myths of the country.

In recent years the techniques of dowsing have been extended and refined to include the measurement of energy fields emanating both from individual stones at the sacred sites, and larger groupings. Varying degrees of measurable magnetic force have been detected – at times so strong as to be outside the scale of ordinary instrumentation. The precise nature and cause of this energy has yet to be established, but it has been noticed that many of the stones possess a circulatory current, and that this changes its polarity from male to female and back again during the time between one new moon and the next (110).

In this connection the ithyphallic nature of certain stones becomes important; for though the earth was generally seen as female and the sky as male, these attributes subtly reversed themselves at times, so that the exchange of life-forces could take place.

In these links between sky and earth there seems to lie a mysterious extension of human birth-patterns. As the stars were believed to influence those under whose aegis they were born, so perhaps the *place* of one's birth and the phase of the moon were of equal – perhaps greater – import. Suppose that, as in many primitive cultures, women sought out certain ancient sites when it came time to give birth (182)? They would, in essence, be tuning in to the very energies of creation. Such children's abilities would be blessed as offspring of the mother, and may well have been revered as future shamans. Certainly the image of the maze, when applied here, is again apposite. What else is the womb but a maze, to which the umbilical cord is an Ariadne's thread leading out into new life?

In this perhaps we have the origin of folk-tales connecting certain of the sacred sites with fertility rituals. Not that such rites did not in all probability take place there; but that they may have been symbolic of a far greater exchange than that between men and women – in fact between the elements themselves. Thus the maypole, a comparatively recent manifestation in the history of mystery celebrations, can be seen as a symbolic linking of earth and heaven, binding those who dance around it – holding ribbons coloured red and green for earth, blue and yellow for sky – into the pattern of birth, life and death which lay at the heart of the maze of earth mysteries.

Theories such as the ley-line system, or the terrestrial zodiacs, are

frequently dismissed as pure fantasy by the sceptically minded, and many are indeed based on 'received' evidence, which cannot be subjected to normal methods of proof. But it is not necessary to subscribe to any such ideas in order to feel the mystery and power of the ancient sites. Whether one sees them as accidental formations of the landscape or freakish mementos of forgotten religion, or as part of a universal pattern of belief, worship and western magical practice, one cannot, unless one is deliberately insensitive, ignore the often profound effect they can have on the individual psyche.

The sheer size of the overall plan indicates something of the ability of our forebears to interpret natural forces, and of the importance they attached to them. All we would ask of the prospective followers of the Western Way, is that they should keep an open mind and heart, and when visiting the sites, try to feel for themselves the flow of energy. This magical force, which springs from deep within the earth, can affect us very powerfully if we let it. It can open doors to the past, as well as demonstrating that these energies are still present, giving life and vitality to all things, and a wisdom to interpret the mystery of the land itself and its relationship to ourselves.

THE PATHS OF THE DRAGON

One particular symbol became associated with the earth mysteries: the Dragon, or winged serpent. The reasons are not hard to see. In the Foretime the snake represented life, death and renewal. It lived in the ground, which made it sacred to the Mother, and it shed its skin, emerging renewed. Creation myths in which the World Snake gave birth to the egg of generation, warming and hatching it as actual reptiles were seen to do, were widespread, and we shall meet with this symbol again, not least in the Gnostic and Orphic mysteries to be dealt with in volume 2 of the present work.

At the heart of the myth of the dying and rising god lay this same belief in the magical power of the serpent. Like it, the god went into the earth (or below the horizon) and came forth renewed. This is the basis of most, if not all, initiation rituals, which enact the 'death' of the uninformed spirit, and its rebirth in a new, wiser form. Thus in the mysteries of Osiris, the god was represented by a vessel filled with Nile water, often with a coiled snake carved upon it. As the Jungian Marie-Louise von Franz remarks: 'This snake is the numen who guards the tomb and protects the transformations of the God.'

Psychologically it symbolizes the deepest levels of the collective unconsciousness, where the transformation of the god-image occurs' (277). This is basic to all ideas of initiation, in which we reach the profoundest depths of the human psyche. To plunge this deeply into the fabric of our universal awareness is to sharpen the senses to a degree almost beyond expression. Here changes occur which alter the very construction of the soul. The world grows thin, allowing the voyager to see beyond the patterns of normal understanding. In this state visions are real, and the earth sends her dreams to lodge in our minds like arrows. Our blood sings with the energy of the Dragon, and we are truly changed.

The numen who guards the transformation of the god has its parallels in the outer world: it was common to find temples of the Classical period and earlier guarded by pet snakes, fed on milk by the priests and priestesses, and encouraged to take up residence in or near the sacred precinct.

The Dome of the Serpents at Rouffignac in France may well represent the earliest illustration of the magical power of the serpent to be found anywhere. Dating from many thousands of years before the more famous Lascaux murals, (probably around 7000 BC) a multitude of coiling forms covers the roof of a cave cut deep into the ancient rock. One recent investigator has suggested they were set there as a form of protection against the unknown; but a far more likely hypothesis is that they are simply a visual glyph of the energy which courses through the body of the earth like a snake within its nest (282). Even archeologists, generally wary of committing themselves, have suggested that certain of these earliest cave paintings may represent water cults – suggesting the flow of earth energy so often linked with actual underground springs and rivers.

Among the Warramunga tribesmen of Australia the serpent is a sign of manhood which they wear painted on back and breast. A part of their sacred ceremonies consists of crawling to the back of a hollow scooped out of the earth beneath a huge rock, from which position alone it is possible to view the painted picture of the sacred snake, Yarapi, painted on the underside of the stone (174). This is clearly reminiscent of the carved spiral and maze forms found inside tombs and mounds in the Celtic world, where only the dead (or those temporarily suspended by an initiatory drink) could see and understand their significance.

That the snake was also sacred to the Moon Goddess is well known, and is preserved today in the astronomical terminology for

the points at which the terrestrial and lunar orbits coincide. The ascending node, where the moon's orbit passes first through that of the earth, is called the Dragon's Head, and the descending node, where the two intersect again, the Dragon's Tail. The line drawn between the two is called the Dragon line, and the time between the passage of the moon through the same lunar node is termed the Dragon's month. If this were not remarkable enough in itself, the symbols used to represent these intersections are very closely similar to the decorative patterns worn by the Warramungas (Figure 3).

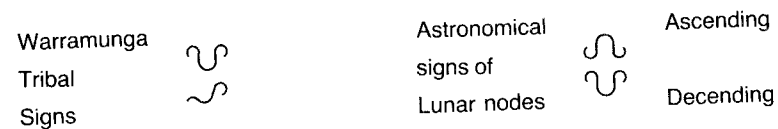


Figure 3

As Joseph Henderson points out in *The Wisdom of the Serpent*, having remarked upon the universality of the snake as a symbol of renewal:

This lies essentially in mankind's having projected into this . . . creature his own secret wish to obtain from the earth a knowledge he cannot find in waking daylight consciousness alone. This is the knowledge of death and rebirth forever withheld except at those times where some transcendental principle, emerging from the depth, makes it available to consciousness (108).

Just such a transcendental principle was the Dragon energy, which emerged from the depth to illuminate and transform mankind's relationship with the earth.

So far we have looked chiefly at the terrestrial power of the Dragon as it is seen to reflect the energy of the earth. But just as its shining coils linked the sacred sites into a network of vitalizing force, so in the heavens it was seen to perform a similar function. The Dragon was identified with the constellation Draco, whose chief star, Draconis, was once the Pole Star of the ancient West. Around this the heavens revolved, protected by the coils of the Dragon, prompting the Italian astronomer, Sabbathai Donolo (c. AD 940) to write: 'When God created the two lights [sun and moon], the five stars [the planets] and the twelve signs [the Zodiac] he also created the fiery

dragon, that it might connect them together, moving about like a weaver with his shuttle' (18).

In Australia, where the Aboriginal culture still contains much that parallels the Foretime, the vital force which animates the land is still recognized; it travels roads laid down by the Gods themselves, in the Dream Time. These ways are cast in a mirror image of the star-paths and are recorded in a visual glyph known as a *tjuringa*, a small stone carved in patterns of lines and circles which encode the paths of the earth-force. They can be used for orienteering, and enable their wielders to travel great distances across the trackless Australian bushland (168).

More than one researcher has noticed the similarity between the marks found on these *tjuringas* and those found at megalithic sites: in particular the curious cup-and-ring markings discovered at a large number of sacred places but never satisfactorily explained (99). It becomes clear, however, that such marks are far more than ordinary maps. They represent not merely geographical formations, but are also guides to the Otherworld; a shaman, wishing to make contact with the hidden vitality of the land, contemplates the *tjuringa*, using it as a gateway to the inner realm.

Everywhere around them our ancestors saw signs of the forces which guided and inspired them. Here was a hill which gave access to the Otherworld; there a stream where the gods of Summer and Winter fought for the hand of the Spring Maiden. But there were other, more potent, signs.

It is still quite common to come across curiously striated hills, roughly conical in shape but with flattened tops, and to find in connection with them an accompanying folk-tale of the Great Worm which, meeting its fate at the hands of a local Hero or Saint, squeezed the hill in its coils, imprinting the land with the shape of its agony.

Here is embodied the story of a great change which overtook the Dragon power and its relationship with mankind. It may seem a long way from the Dragon priests to the heroes remembered chiefly as *slayers* of the dragon; yet they are closely related to the pattern of change and decay which overcame the Native Mysteries. Dragon-priest to Dragon-slayer is but a small step when seen in the light of the Christian adoption of ancient sites to build their churches.

Where the ancient priests stood as interpreters and purveyors of earth energy, the new religion brought condemnation of the old ways. Dragon energy and its related symbolism became outlawed, and was later identified with the Edenic Serpent, a creature to be

spurned beneath the heel of its slayers – usually St Michael or St George, whose role is recorded in the dedications of churches to them at places once associated with Dragon power.

But the importance of the old serpent mounds remains. On the one hand they indicate the presence of Dragon energy, which may be invoked by the action of climbing them – though this is best not done without some prior intention. But their main importance is their relationship to the maze.

We have encountered this image several times now. We shall do so again. Nor should we be surprised to find that in connection with the mysteries of the earth it is of considerable importance. The serpent, as we have seen, is a symbol of the magic power of the earth; its sinuous form is a subtly changing, *living* maze, closely associated with initiatory experience. In the mythology of the Hopi Indians of Arizona, these elements come together even more closely.

For the Hopi the symbol of the maze is that of the Mother, and represents a passage through different levels of understanding (280). It points the way, through symbolic truth, to actual experience – the way of the serpent being synonymous with the way of the earth, and both represented by the initiation of the maze.

Hills possessing a serpentine shape, such as Glastonbury Tor or the Herefordshire Beacon, or indeed the great mound of Silbury Hill which lies adjacent to one of the most important temples of serpent power in Britain – at Avebury – are all associated with earth mysteries. Geoffrey Ashe has recently suggested that the Tor was intended as a ritual site, which, when walked in procession, gave admittance to an interior world (7). Silbury, for all attempts to explain it, remains an enigma unless seen as a spiral dragon-hill.

The importance of the serpent in the Foretime can be seen in the shapes adopted by their temple builders, who laid out many of the great stone edifices to conform to the pattern of the earth-force. Thus at Avebury, whose serpentine form was first recognized in the eighteenth century, the circle is crossed by a serpent-like avenue, while at Carnac in Brittany, the name of which is derived from 'Cairn-Hac', Hill of the Serpent, the coiling shape assumed by the many hundreds of stone avenues is both an image of the serpent and the maze.

But perhaps the most sensational image of this kind is found in the United States, at Adams County, Ohio. It takes the form of a vast serpentine earthwork, over 1,254 feet in length, arranged in seven coils ending in a triple-coiled tail. In its jaws it holds an egg, symbol

of creation, and it combines to express both maze and spiral in a single form. Built by the earliest inhabitants of the American continent, it is one of the clearest representations of the Native Tradition in the USA. Coupled with the Hopi symbol already discussed, it makes a clear statement of the universality of the cult (232).

The oldest way of raising the power of the serpent was the Maze dance – performed as a path to enlightenment and a joining with the gods. Traces of these ritual dance-floors have been found as far apart as Germany, Greece, Australia, and Britain, where relics of several hundred labyrinths can still be detected (230). To enter the maze is to try the passage of death; to emerge is to be reborn – patterns which still bear meaning for us today. In this, as in the carved spirals of the tomb builders, the serpentine coils through which the initiate moved or danced towards his birth were representative of both the womb and of the seed which passed through it – from both came new life, the energy of creation carried through the earth by the power of the Dragon/Serpent.

This was the function also of the barrow mounds discussed earlier in this chapter. Maes Howe in the Orkneys, La Houge Bie in the Channel Isles, Brugh na Boyne in Ireland, West Kennet in Wiltshire – all were to some extent images of the earth-womb. Here, just as the initiate would lie in drugged sleep to take the vision quest and return with word of the ancestors, so the bones of the dead were laid in foetal pose to await rebirth. Painted red to signify the life-force, the blood of the tribe, they were a reminder of the way back into the earth which all must one day take.

The final period in which Dragon power was actively worked with and recognized was marked by a steady decline which all but obscured knowledge of the lines of force and the true use of the ancient sites it vivified. After the Foretime, when the shamanic priests focused the energy felt by all, a change took place. Gradually, the priesthood came to stand between the people and their gods, becoming increasingly the guardians of a secret knowledge intended only for the few. By the advent of Christianity there were few who remembered the old ways well enough to offer opposition. Those who did were either killed or held up as objects of ridicule by the followers of the new way. It was a pattern which would be often repeated throughout the ages, and is still prevalent in our own time.

But though obscured for ages, the mystery of Dragon power and the sites of its tenure remained largely untouched by the passage of years. They awaited their recovery, and in time it came, in the shape

of Alfred Watkins and the ley-line enthusiasts – many working in ignorance of the real significance of what they had stumbled upon – and in a few Hermetically trained magicians of our own time, who have begun to see the Dragon energy as a source too long neglected.

Though it is no longer possible to see the pattern whole and entire as it once was, there still exist enough fragments of knowledge which, combined with the evidence of the sites themselves, can enable us to restore the picture. Reports by such eighteenth century antiquaries as John Aubrey (11) and William Stukeley (251) who saw many of the sites virtually intact (and incidentally praised their 'classical' design) give evidence of their original form. Other evidence is hidden in folk-lore (185) where the Dragon appears regularly as a creature of fearsome character and fiery breath – and as a guardian of immense treasure: a half-conscious harking-back to the treasure of life and energy once found beneath its sign.

None of this can substitute for a personal visit to one of the ancient sites. They are still largely neglected; speculation about their purpose has obscured the fact that they are there to be used, and that within them lies a source of contact with the Native Wisdom Tradition which constitutes the backbone of the Western Way.

THE WISDOM OF THE EARTH

We have spoken of the first magics, the passionate awareness of the living being upon which we walk, and of the way her worshippers discovered this and the energies which flowed through it. The symbol of the Dragon represented those energies until it fell into disrepute. But no matter how we see the energies of the earth we have to learn to exercise responsibility for what has been held in trust for us for thousands of years. The wisdom of the earth is ours for the seeking; but we have to be careful how we go about the search. Nowadays we have grown away from the earth and out of step with her rhythms. Where once we acknowledged her influence on our lives, cared for and garnered her riches, we now rape and destroy, greedily snatching all she has to offer by way of food and mineral resources, leaving her barren and ruined, her once fair face furrowed by our roads and pocked with our houses and factories. The earth is now considered by many as a dead object whose resources we can strip at will.

This has been the story since the advent of civilization. We have

taken what we wanted and given back increasingly less; we have lost touch with an ages-old understanding, a relationship with the environment which was once one of sharing, and where the division of spoils never exceeded the necessary; where we gave back to the earth, in a full and complete understanding of the act, our most precious commodity – the body – to feed and nourish her.

Even the recent ecological trend has recognized this. When the scientists Lovelock and Epton developed their theory of the globe as a living entity (216), they named her Gaia at the suggestion of the novelist William Golding; thus echoing her classical and pre-classical worshippers and answering to an instinct which predates ecological science by many thousands of years. As Theodore Roszak, commenting on this, noted: 'There clings to the image something of an older and once universal natural philosophy that quite spontaneously experienced the earth as a divine being animated by its own moods and intentions – the primordial Mother Earth' (216). It is this 'universal philosophy' which lies behind the stone circles and Dragon paths, the Serpent power and the initiation-dreams of the mound builders. Within the earth lay all secrets: the way to the Otherworld and the Ancestors. But more than this the earth was a dwelling place for personified energies, the first Shapers of the world, who laboured long over its perfection, and came in time to be bound beneath it.

The classical myths of the Titans are the clearest representation of this, and if studied they can offer us a profound message about the way we treat the earth and what may happen if we fail to restore the original state of balance which once existed between ourselves and our environment. The clue lies in the use of the word 'titanic' – originally meaning 'lord', but now more often applied to the most awesome energies of the earth: the force of the volcano, the whirling wind, the hunger of the ocean.

The Titans were the children of Gaia and Uranus, Earth-Mother and Sky-Father, and they sided with their mother against the cruelty of Uranus, who had banished their elder brothers to the underworld of Tartarus. Choosing Cronos for their leader, they laid siege to their father and Cronos castrated him with a flint sickle. The blood from his wounds fathered the Erinnys, the Furies, who are bound to avenge crimes of family bloodshed. On Uranus's death, Cronos assumed his father's power (91, 129).

These are the first, the primal ones, whose deeds are immeasurably savage, whose stature is huge. The next generation of gods were no

less so. Cronos married his sister Rhea – another Earth-Mother. But Uranus and Gaia had prophesied that Cronos would be dethroned by one of his children, and so every child born to him by Rhea, he devoured. But Rhea secretly bore another child, Zeus, and hid him away, substituting a stone for her child in the cradle, which Cronos duly swallowed. Zeus returned as cup-bearer to his father when he was grown up, and gave Cronos a poisoned drink which acted as an emetic. Rhea's children were disgorged and restored whole to her. Cronos in turn was banished – some say to the British Isles, where he sleeps still. Zeus and his siblings formed the Olympian pantheon and the Titans were chained beneath the earth.

While these legends tell us much about the power struggle which took place between succeeding Greek races, the archetypes have their resonance with our own times. Nothing has changed in one sense: we are still the children of Gaia and her energies are still ours to command – to be freed, loosed or harnessed, according to our needs. As is all too obvious we are not in control of them, and the Titanic energies which spilled over into violence in the myth threaten to do so again today.

The forces of nature have always been rightly feared and mankind's relationship to them has always been a changing one. In one sense it has always been a struggle to combat and protect ourselves from them. Fear of giants and monsters, perpetuated by these early Greek models, recurs again and again in the mythologies of other lands. It was this which resulted in the change of the Dragon into the Serpent of the Judeo-Christian Fall: the Beast of the Apocalypse, overcome by the Woman Clothed By the Sun in Revelations chapter 12 (21). Yet the Titanic nature of the Dragon is well attested. In the Babylonian myth of Tiamat and Marduk, Tiamat is a gigantic sea-dragon, and her children are also Titans. She is conquered and her body riven apart to form the matter of the cosmos – her liquids become rivers, her breath the air, her bones the rocks. Once again the story is of Titanic forces, imprisoned through the creation of life, and the Tiamat story in part explains the fear of the Symbolic Feminine in her primal, Titanic closeness to the elements (71).

Today the Titanic forces have made their latest manifestation in the shape of the nuclear threat. Gaia's children rise again and one above all dominates the scene – Uranus. The first-born personified the earth's energies as gods, and confined the Titans within the earth while the Olympians were assumed into heaven as constellations. The Titans gave their names to minerals and elements, one of which

is currently to the forefront of consciousness: uranium, the major component from which the world's most destructive weapons are made.

Uranium has not, of course, always been used for nuclear technology; nor is it evil in itself. Left in the earth it is a positive source of energy, as are the Titans themselves. They are Gaia's children, the personifications of her energies, without which all would be barren. But this is reversed when they are brought out, or when uranium is exposed under the light of the Olympian heavens. Again we seem to hear an echo of the ancient myth which poses the gods of heaven against those of earth.

We have not had much respect for mineral life in this century. If we treated the minerals we mine from the earth as living entities, we would at last be showing responsibility towards the forces we seek to master. As followers of the Western Way we have a unique opportunity to work with the Titanic energies, and to channel their power through the earth, by the activation of the ancient sites.

We are the people of the earth, the guardians of her energies, the custodians of her wisdom. As the nuclear question becomes a key issue for all manner of people, we begin to reach an understanding that all energy – Titanic or human – has its own flow which can be misapplied or used appropriately – and that we are its wielders.

Stories of the Titanic forces of the earth have not remained static. They grew and changed with time. Ultimately all stories of giants derive from memories of a projected Golden Age where Titanic energy was seen as beneficial rather than as destructive.

But, as with all perfect states, the edges were blurred with time. Memories of the Titans were replaced by those of quarrelsome and all-too-human gods and goddesses. Finally they too were reduced to the Faery-Folk, the dwellers-under-the-hill. Paradise, the Realm of the Shining Ones, became the Otherworld, and the people of the Golden Age became its inhabitants.

However, the Titanic archetypes have left their images on the landscape itself. The vast shapes incised on the plains of Nazca, or the great chalk hill figures of Southern Britain, are testimonies to the way in which the first-born saw the originators of our race: the Gods before the gods (45). Echoes of Atlantis, of a time when evil, sickness and death were virtually banished, remain at the deepest levels of our consciousness. From Plato to Tolkien the archetype of the Golden Age continues to fascinate, and behind it lies an awareness of the old earth magic in its earliest form.

But the natural forces which vitalized the earth became something to exploit rather than something to work with, and as a result, the ancient ancestral levels of experience sank deeper into memory, becoming harder to reach except by long and often perilous paths. Yet inwardly the ancient chthonic powers remain unchanged, gradually rising again from immeasurable depths, until in our own time they have begun to return to the surface again. The Old Gods may thus be said to walk abroad again; but it must be said that they do not always take a palatable form. The example of Uranus is apposite here: the current misuse of uranium has caused it to assume monstrous proportions.

Properly understood and recognized, it is still not too late to redeem the misuse to which Titanic energies have been put; many are once again being tapped into and worked with creatively. But we have to get to know them thoroughly, to recover them from beneath the layers of unconscious thought to which they have long been consigned.

Nor does this imply a back to nature mentality: we are everywhere the unknowing possessors of a lost landscape of circle and stone, trackway and mound. If we are once again to be in tune with the Titanic energies which still vivify them – though in changed form – we must visit them, get up early and find them in the dawn or even earlier, when the silence is complete and the Titanic beings close at hand. It matters not where or even how we approach the earth, save only that we do so in the spirit of love and caring and with a just degree of respect. Awesome strengths lie just beneath our feet, not to be used for idle curiosity. Remember that you tread on sacred ground and that you have already taken the first step towards a relationship with the mystery beneath, and that here you may invoke the old powers of the Western Way, sleeping lightly under the surface of the earth. Cernunnos, the Horned God, or Wayland, Smith of the Gods, or even earlier, more primaeval forms, may rise to greet you from the green hill sides.

The task we set ourselves is one of spiritual ecology, the seeking of our own personal contact with the spirit of the earth, whether we find this in the image of the Dragon, through walking the maze, or in following the outlines of a stone circle. There are many hundreds of sacred sites in our homelands; many are ruinous or totally destroyed; others still active. They await your visit, for in the right frame of mind you can awaken their slumbering energies. To vitalize a single centre of the energy grid is to send out ripples to every part of the

land. And then you may indeed find that you 'stand in a place that is holy ground and . . . breathe the intoxicating exhalations as did the sibyls of old' (218). But whether these things happen or not, one thing is certain: you will never be quite the same again. And neither will the land.



MAGIC EARTH EXERCISE NOTES

As we have said, the best way to experience at first hand the power of the earth energies is to visit one of the sites. Try to approach the old places along one of the sacred ways. Many are described in the writings of Watkins, Michell, Devereux, Screeton or Pepper (281, 168, 66, 227, 197). Others await your own discovery. They may be either stone circle, chambered tomb or serpent mounds – but the question still remains of what to do when you arrive. There are many possibilities, given the right circumstances, which you may discover for yourselves; two are offered here as a way into the world of the earth mysteries.

The first exercise is for use in relation to one of the old tracks, and may be applied to any ancient pathway which still retains the serpent energy. It comes from the great assemblage of native myth and lore known as the *Mabinogion*, and concerns the figure of Sarn Elen, or Elen of the Roads who is, according to Sir John Rhys (213), a goddess of sunset and dawn who watches over the ancient ways by night. To invoke her, and to walk one of these ways from dusk to dawn, is to open up the inner landscape of your country to your waking eye. The pathworking which follows is part of her story, and use of it is to invoke the most ancient laws of dream and mystery. So use it with care and in a proper frame of mind, remembering that these are not merely images or archetypes to be juggled with at our will – but the most potent energies which underlie all our life and being. Treat them with respect and they will respond. Enter their presence in a spirit of disrespect or levity and do not expect to experience anything.

The second exercise is intended primarily to give a deeper understanding of the nature of the terrestrial zodiacs. Although it is based upon what is known of the example to be found at Glastonbury, it can, with only a little adaptation, be applied to other such sites. Thus the serpent mounds of the Americas would be suitable, as would Mont Saint Michel in Brittany. It is not necessary to have visited any of these sites – though of course to have done so would be useful. Careful study of a photograph or painting of the place before attempting the meditation would be just as satisfactory – the essence

of the realization being in *what* happens rather than in *where* it happens.

EXERCISE 4 THE SHIMMERING WAY

As you relax with eyes closed, gradually let your surroundings fade. You find that you are standing at the top of a hill: not a high one, but one which nonetheless permits you to see for a considerable distance across the countryside that surrounds you. Facing West you see before you a faint but well-trodden path leading down from the hill and out across the flat lands at its foot. On every side stretches a chequered pattern of fields, and as you look down at them they move and whisper, stirred by a warm breeze from the South, looking for all the world like a many-coloured sea. But through the midst of them all the path leads away and away into the distance, vanishing at last into a haze of mist which might hide higher ground.

Starting down from the hill you begin following the path. Insects hum round you and there is a sound of distant birds, but otherwise the world seems as silent and still as though it had only recently woken from a long sleep.

For a long while you walk onward, always following the faint track. Gradually the sun begins to descend in a fiery glow, and dusk advances towards darkness. As the daylight fades you become aware that the path is rising again, and that it is faintly glimmering with a light of its own.

Still you follow it, climbing steadily all the while now, until you find yourself at the beginning of a range of hills leading towards a soaring bulk of mountainous country. The moon has risen now, and floods the scene with silvery light. Though you wonder that you do not feel tired, you press on, climbing higher through the cool night air, scented with night-time flowers and a sense of growing and burgeoning life.

At length, after climbing for some time, you round a shoulder of the mountains, and see before you the entrance to a narrow valley, filled with moonlight and shadows. As you pause for a moment you see that at the head of the valley on a wide shelf of rock at the foot of more mountains, stands a great circle of ancient, weathered stones, wreathed in coils of white mist. The path you have been following leads straight to the circle. Hurrying now, you press onward, for this is your destination.

Arriving at the circle you find that the stones are far greater than you had realized. They tower over you, casting long shadows on the ground. But there is no sense of threat about them. You are welcome here, and press forward without fear.

Inside, at the centre of the circle, is a great monolith, lying lengthwise on the earth. Seated upon this, as though in a natural chair, is the slender figure of a woman. Her hair is long and glinting, and her gown is of rich red stuff edged with gold. Over it she wears a rich blue cloak, fastened at the left shoulder with a round brooch of intricate workmanship. Her face is of such beauty that you know she cannot be of mortal stock, and you bow low before her in awe and wonderment.

For several moments you kneel thus before the golden Lady, until at last you hear words that seem to form themselves within your mind.

'What seek you here?'

You must answer truthfully and without hesitation:

'I seek Sarn Elen. I seek a key to the Shimmering Way.'

'Sarn Elen you have found. Why seek you the Shimmering Way?'

'That I may come to learn the mystery of the land.'

'Then you are well come.'

Silently the Lady, whom you now know to be Sarn Elen, rises from the stone and beckons you to follow. As you do so you notice that both the central stone and all the rest of the circle are intricately carved with spirals and lines, like huge maps. Try to remember something of what you see, for you may need them later.

You follow the Lady to the Western edge of the circle, and find that you are standing as though in a gateway. Before you the ground falls rapidly away towards a great plain that stretches to the horizon. Criss-crossing it are many faintly glowing lines, interspersed at certain points with spirals of light. You realize that the designs on the stones of the circle are related directly to them, and that what you are seeing is a network of ancient trackways connecting other circles and standing stones across the whole country and beyond.

As you watch, the Lady raises her arms and at her command the lines of light burn brighter until you can hardly bear to look at them. You feel the energy coursing through the land to your feet and then rising through your own body until it reaches the crown of your head and flows over you. You feel yourself bathed in light, and though you dare not look directly at the Lady you know that she shines forth like a great beacon-star into the night.

Slowly the light begins to fade, until it is once more only a faint glimmer in the moon-washed land. Turning away you find that Elen of the Roads is no longer at your side, nor indeed anywhere in the circle, and that the sky is beginning to be flushed with the first rose-hue of dawn. As you stand amid the circle of great stones, the scene slowly fades, and you find yourself once again seated where you began the journey. Let yourself return slowly to normal consciousness, but remember that now the Shimmering Ways are open to you to visit at any time, and that when you next walk one of the ancient ways you will be aware of the energy and life which is a part of them, and is now a part of you.

EXERCISE 5 THE TERRESTRIAL ZODIAC

You are standing at the top of a rise looking towards the shape of a great Hill. It is night, but there is a full moon and you have no difficulty in seeing what follows. The Hill is surrounded by water upon which small, light craft ply to and fro in the moonlight. Mist rises from the earth on all sides, so that you seem to be standing on an island in more senses than one. You can see people moving about on the side of the Hill nearest you. They are dressed in long robes and carry torches that flare and smoke in the damp air, adding to the miasmatic quality of the scene. At the top of the Hill is a great trilithon of ancient stones, and as you look, a brilliant glow begins to shine out from within them. It grows brighter and brighter until the whole scene is bathed in light and a great ball of fire rises from the Hill and climbs heavenward, where it hovers, casting a brilliant glow over everything. From it rays of light shine forth, falling on the tops of hills on every side, some close to, some far off. Answering gleams of light come from these hills, and you become aware that a great host of people is gathering on all sides, though you cannot see them. Your eyes are again drawn to the Hill, and there you see a great figure which you know to be the King climbing the last stretch of the hillside, bearing across his outstretched arms a great sword in a sheath of red and gold.

At the summit, just beyond the edge of the trilithon, stands a figure clad in shimmering robes. This is the Lady, and though she seems no taller than the King, she is somehow larger than life, invested with titanic stature and majesty. At her shoulder stands a great white horse, its coat gleaming in the light, its eyes flashing as it tosses its

head. The King advances and exchanges a symbolic greeting with the Lady of the Hill. He then mounts the great steed and raises the sword, still sheathed, above his head. From the darkness that seems impenetrable around the stones, twelve figures appear, each with a sign of the Zodiac painted on their brows. Each one bears a symbol, some of which you may be able to see, and others not. These are the Twelve Treasures of the Year, linked with the inner life of the Land, and the figures are their guardians. They form a circle, raising their symbols towards the Lady and the King. Then they turn until they are facing outwards and begin to move. Faster and faster they move, until they form a bright ring of light. The King and the Lady always remain still at the centre, the axle of the turning wheel. Soon the light grows too bright for you to see the figures clearly any longer. They become a whirling wheel of light, which now rises from the Hill and ascends towards the glowing light which still hovers overhead. The two meet and become one, burning even brighter for a moment before beginning to fade, dispersing outward to the stars. Slowly the scene returns to normal. The Hilltop is deserted and only the light of the moon shines serenely over all. Awake slowly to your own place again, but try to remember as much of what you may have realized as possible.

You have the opportunity to work with one figure of the Zodiac every month, as the wheel of the year turns. See the wheel surrounding your land and people, and mediate the energies of the requisite sign outwards. In times of national crisis, focus upon the King and Lady of the Hill as the axial balance of the wheel, for they are the symbolic guardians of the land.

CHAPTER 3

Meeting the gods

An innate knowledge of the Gods is coexistent with our very essence.

Iamblichus: *De Mysteriis*.

All the gods are one god; and all the goddesses are one goddess, and there is one initiator.

Dion Fortune: *Aspects of Occultism*.

NATIVE MYTHS AND GOD-FORMS

Every country has its native myth cycles: they are what makes the inner reality of the land. Thus it is very important for us to be familiar with the mythology of our own place, and to understand where it fits in the overall myth-patterns of the West. Anthropologists like Ken Wilber (287) or John Layard (135) can help us here; as can mythographers like Joseph Campbell (39) and Robert Graves (92). But we need to go further than any of these if we are to achieve the kind of intimate knowledge required. In a book of this scope it is obviously not possible to deal with more than a selection of the archetypes and scenarios which make up the native mythos. We have chosen to deal primarily with Celtic myths, since these are generally more accessible than, say, Nordic or Teutonic cycles. In keeping to one mythology, and that one with which we are familiar and have worked with ourselves, we can more easily show a complete set of archetypes in use.

This is not to say that others are less valid. To a native of the Germanic world the Siegfried myths incorporated into the *Nibelungenlied* (187) would be more appropriate than the Ulster cycle or the Arthurian mythos. The same is true of the Finnish Kalevala (125), the French Charlemagne cycle (50) or the Spanish epic of the Cid

(55). In the Americas there are the earth magics of the Hopi Indians (280), or the grim mythology of the Aztec and Toltec cultures (138). Each of these is the native myth of the country concerned. All are part of the Western Mystery Tradition, and many have lent aspects of themselves to our own more familiar magical territory. This is because all myths were once the same myths: the quest for fire, the naming of the gods, the rites of passage, and the discovery of agriculture and animal husbandry, as well as the process which metamorphosed the *genius loci* into anthropomorphic forms. Only the immense stretch of time has confused and darkened the lines of the mythic universe, combining deities of sun and moon, earth and stars, dividing those of corn and wine, lightning and rain; mingling and intermingling form with form, until it takes a considerable effort of mind to separate them into their original shapes and descriptions.

It is no easy thing to see the outlines of the early Celtic deities. Written records are scarce. Caesar, to whose account we owe most of our contemporary information, is less reliable than he might be (37). Yet, if we cannot read about the ancient gods we can be aware of them in other ways. If we are to learn to work with the major Western archetypes, this is what we must do. And we can only do so by learning to recognize and work with the individual qualities of our native god-forms.

Once, every tree, stone and spring had a tutelary spirit which those who approached it could seek out, with which they could establish contact. In a larger sense the whole country had a national identity embodied in the spirit of place, or as it would nowadays be termed, the racial archetype. The wrinkled faces of ancient stones were the faces of the gods, and the voices of brook and stream the voices of their identity. We have largely forgotten the names of these personifications – though they may still be detected in the old names of those places where our ancestors once worshipped. The greater forces, those whose characteristics went beyond the merely local, were neglected also, but not forgotten. They lived on in changing form, through the stories and poems which grew up around them, enshrining something of their mystery and worship as their outer forms grew blurred with time and neglect.

These were the Gods, and their children were the figures of fairytale and hero-story: like the Bear-God, Artos, whose cult was once widespread in Britain, but who became absorbed into the cycle of stories centring around the figure of national hero – Arthur of Britain. Or like Arianrhod, once a moon-goddess, but who in the

Mabinogion (146) becomes a semi-human character, the only vestige of her original role remaining in her name which means 'Silver-Wheel'.

So the forms changed, and the old names were either forgotten or grew new meanings and identities. But they never went away; their worship continued in isolated areas, long after the coming of new ways and beliefs. Sometimes here, at last, they died out, or became absorbed by new deities. Or else they dwindled to become the dwellers in the Hollow Hills, the Faery-Folk, of whom so much has been written and so little understood. Folk memory enshrined their names and natures, but seldom their functions. They grew old and weary and perhaps in time they went away. But others adapted, retreating into the deep places of the earth or passing into timeless sleep that took no thought of the strange antics of human beings.

Until at length, people began to seek out these ancient denizens of the inner world, to acknowledge their once proud heritage as rulers of earth and sky. The medieval witch-cults recognized the mystery of the natural elements and began to worship as their ancestors had done. They were following the natural cycle of decay and rebirth of which we have spoken already: the law that says that nothing is ever wasted, that causes seemingly forgotten beliefs and powers to spring up again with renewed vigour, and to find new followers among the disaffected and the wise.

Those who go forth on the Western Way are just such people: to them, the old gods and goddesses are not dead, they are potent forces in archetypal guise. If we are to follow the native mysteries, we must be able to recognize the faces of the gods. Study the very selective gazetter which follows: these archetypes should become part of your daily meditation and practice. This is the first step towards a deeper appreciation of the gods behind gods, the archetypal energies of which we spoke in chapter 2. However, it is important to realize that what is worshipped in the outer world as deity may, in the inner realm, become a personalized energy to be worked with directly.

This is one of the most profound mysteries of the Western Way. It shows how we may re-establish a harmonic with the inner reality represented by the children of the earth. Our ancestors knew this well, and enshrined it in their religious beliefs and practices. To our ancestors, the earth's first children were the Gods, and *their* children the heroes who came after. In the blurring which occurs in the immense distance of time separating us from them, it is often hard to tell where god or goddess ends and hero or heroine begins. Thus the

figure of Bran, in the Welsh pantheon, is clearly a god, and Gawain, in the Arthur cycle, just as clearly a hero, but one who happens to assume the sun-mantle of midsummer godhead. But who, or what, is Merlin? No god perhaps, but certainly a great tutelary guardian of the inner realm. There are many answers to these questions, and no one may know them all. The Gods have many garments and each is a name. We can make no attempt here to separate them into ranks of mortal and immortal. The answers to such questions are just as likely to be provided by those who work with these archetypes as by the authors of books. No matter what your own background may be or what country you may hail from, you will recognize the type of the Gods – Thunderer, Shiner, Watcher over the Land. The lord or the lady of the moon is known in all lands, as are the gods of river and tree and stone.

Much is written about the gods, especially those of the Norse and Greek worlds – but few writers ever go beyond the delineation of type and character: whether Bacchus was a typical wine-god or Poseidon purely a god of the sea. Yet these were no mere abstractions to those who worshipped them. We seem to forget that the people of the ancient world were also possessed of faith, that they believed in the absolute power of their gods. One has only to read Iamblichus (115) or Plutarch (203), or Apuleius (5) to see the truth of this. They had a system of belief, a theology, quite as complex and meaningful as any held today. The Gods permeated everything. As the Neoplatonist, Iamblichus (AD 250–325), says:

The power of the Gods is not partly comprehended by any place or partible human body . . . but is wholly everywhere present within the natures that are capable of receiving it. . . . Moreover, existing itself prior to all things, by its own separate nature, it becomes sufficient to fill all things, so far as each is able to partake of it (115).

It is doubly important for us to realize this today, for it is telling us to tread carefully. We are not wholly empty vessels waiting to be filled up by a sudden inrush of god or earth energy. Iamblichus is clear about this: the power is sufficient to fill all things, *so far as each is able to partake of it*. These are not mere empty abstractions with which we are dealing. Remember also, that while the god-forms of the Native Tradition can still be utilized in as valid a way as the Messianic figures of revealed religion, they need first to be regenerated. One of the problems of working with ancient archetypes in

esoteric work is the quality of the material which is communicated by means of analeptic memory. The nature of the pagan contacts often reflects earlier and more primitive concerns. The material and contacts are valid in themselves but need to be synthesized into modern consciousness by a mediating of love, wisdom and power.

Those who find the worship of orthodox religion difficult are unlikely to find work with ancient god-forms any more congenial. The truth of the matter is that *the god-form is the representative of an abstract energy*, which the esotericist, rather than worshipping, mediates to Middle Earth. God and initiate are co-creators, each reflecting the worlds in which they live (see chapter 4). By identification and subsequent affiliation with the god, the initiate works with certain energies which are themselves transformative. By close attention and sensitivity to the energies represented by the god-form, the initiate is drawn into intimate contact with and awareness of that archetypal energy. This is what is meant when we speak of someone 'being contacted'. It forms the basis of religion when it is informed by cosmic understanding rather than naive superstition. In this way, it is possible to work with pagan god-forms (relating as they are to energies now represented by later archetypes), as long as their energies are fully synthesized into modern consciousness.

If once we accept this we are able to understand the full significance and efficacy of the signs which are the faces of the Gods. Iamblichus calls these *synthamata*, inexplicable images, and accords them an individual power to work within the framework of creation. 'We do not' he says,

perform these things through intellectual perception; since if this were the case, the intellectual energy . . . would be imparted by us . . . [instead] when we do not energize intellectually, the *synthamata* themselves perform by themselves their proper work, and the ineffable power of the Gods itself knows by itself, its own images (115).

This is to restate that the realities we recognize *outwardly* have their own *inner* correlatives, whether we call them Gods or archetypes, and that to work with them is to relate to them, in partnership of the divine work.

THE FACES OF THE GODS

Arianrhod. Goddess of moon and stars. Her legend appears in the *Mabinogion*, in the story of Math, Son of Mathonwy. Like Ceridwen (q.v.), with whom she has much in common, Arianrhod is an enchantress and initiator. She is a hard, stern mistress of destiny, setting heavy *geasa* (prohibitions) upon the candidate. Taliesin (q.v.) says that he spent three periods in the prison of Arianrhod, referring to the ever-spinning castle of the Celtic Otherworld, of which she is mistress, and to his initiation there. Caer Arianrhod is both the castle of Death and of Rebirth, and in Welsh stands for the Corona Borealis – the Crown of the North – suggesting a link between Arianrhod and the Greek Ariadne, who received a crown from Dionysus which became known as the Corona in subsequent myths. As she is so firmly rooted in the Otherworld, Arianrhod has no associated places, though she is most definitely a stellar contact.

REFERENCES *Mabinogion* (146), Gruffydd (96), Ross (215).

Arthur. Son of Uther Pendragon, King of Britain, and Igraine, an Atlantean princess brought hither by Merlin (q.v.). Taken by the enchanter at birth to be brought up in secret and trained in the arts of kingship, war and magic, Arthur subsequently achieved the mystery of the Sword in the Stone, by this proving his right to rule. He founded the Round Table of knights dedicated to bringing order in the world – their work reflected in inner as well as outer realms. He married Guinevere, who represented the matriarchal mystery schools of Britain, and who through her love for Lancelot brought about the downfall of Arthur's kingdom. He passed to Avalon, one of the many names for the Otherworld, after a final battle, in which he slew and was wounded by his son Mordred, there to be healed of his wounds by Morgan le Fay (q.v.). By some seen to be waiting for the time when he will be needed, he sleeps beneath hollow hills as far apart as Alderley Edge in Cheshire and Mount Etna in Italy. No single place of contact can be singled out, though there are numerous sites which bear his name. Really the tutelary spirit of the British Isles, he may be encountered at almost any site if the heart and will of the seeker are truly bent upon discovering him.

REFERENCES Malory (157), *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (85), *Mabinogion* (146), *The Welsh Triads* (268), Loomis (144), Morris (172), Ashe (8), Knight (132).

Bran the Blessed. Titanic God of the Celts. So vast was he that when once his followers desired to cross the ocean he waded across towing their ships behind him. A god of earth and mountain, his story is long and complex and can be found in the *Mabinogion*; but the deepest mystery associated with him concerns his 'death' at which he commanded that his head be struck from his body and carried thereafter by his followers. It continued to communicate with them for some time, and led them at last to a mysterious island (sometimes identified as Bardsey, off the South Wales coast) where the 'Company of the Noble Head' found lodging and were fed and entertained by Bran's head in a state of timeless joy. Finally one of the company opened a forbidden door which looked West and in this way they were reminded of their mortality and of the passing of time. Thereafter a few of the company, of whom Taliesin (q.v.) was one, carried the miraculous head to the White Mount (now called Tower Hill, in London) and buried it there. It was believed that while it remained undisturbed no enemy could ever conquer the land, but Arthur (q.v.) dug it up in the belief that no one but he should protect the country of Britain, and thereafter it was lost. There are many aspects of the story and character of Bran which make him a prototype Grail contact — his links with the fate of the land being the most obvious. He is also a type of the Cronos figure (q.v.) whose influence may still be felt at certain places. Dinas Bran, in Wales, has strong associations with him; though like Arthur his presence is diffuse and may be felt at many sites throughout the country.

REFERENCES *Mabinogion* (146), Ross (215), MacCana (148), Newstead (186).

Brigit/Brigantia. Irish Brigit, daughter of the Dagda of the Tuatha de Danaan (q.v.), is the goddess of poets, healing and smithcraft. She is sometimes called a triple goddess. She is remarkable in that her cult has passed down to the present with hardly any change. St Brigit of Kildare (AD 525) incorporated in her legend much of pagan Brigit's corpus. The Christian shrine at Kildare was maintained by twenty nuns — the twenty-first being Brigit herself; a sacred fire was kept burning in the middle of a sanctuary which was forbidden to men. It was extinguished at the Reformation, but the cult of St Brigit is still strong. She is a secondary patron of Ireland, but her Christian influence is somewhat softened in Scotland where she is concerned with the ills of women and the care of cattle. Her feast-day is

1 February, and invocations to her pagan as well as Christian aspect are best made at that time. In Britain she is associated with the figure of Brigantia, the local goddess of the Brigantes, a Celtic tribe of Northern England. A statue of Brigantia was found at Birrens where she bears the emblems of Victory and Minerva in Romano-British guise. Her places are (for St Brigit) the shrine at Kildare, Co. Kildare, and (for Brigantia) the whole of the West Riding, which has strong natural associations with her.

REFERENCES Ross (215), Rees (210), Carmichael (42), *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (191).

Cailleach Beare or Bheur, Carlin. Cailleach means 'hag'; in polite Gaelic it is still used to refer to an old wife, or grandmother. The Cailleach is one of the great titans of the British isles: references to her remain in folklore, rarely in textual sources. The Cailleach Beare, or Hag of Beare, is the primeval goddess of South-West Ireland and, like her Scottish equivalent, the Cailleach Bheur, leaps across mountain ranges which are formed from stones dropped from her apron. Like Ceridwen (q.v.) she pursues her son — although the story is sometimes reversed so that she is the quarry, and the two follow a half-yearly chase, in which Summer and Winter compete for mastery. Like the Middle-Eastern goddess Tiamat, the Cailleach has many associations with water-dragon stories. Although she appears as a withered hag, she has the ability to show herself as a young maiden: the folk-rituals which accompany the feast of St Brigit (q.v.) hint that this transformation is accomplished at the transition from Winter to Spring. In Scottish lowland folklore the Cailleach becomes the Gyre Carlin, sometimes also called Nicnevin, or Daughter of the Bones, not unlike the Indian Kali in effect, from which it may be divined that she is scarcely the most comfortable of archetypes to work with. Places associated with the Cailleach are too numerous to be listed, but are often found in place names like the numerous mountains called Sliabh na Cailleach in Ireland and Scotland. The old rocks of the Beare Peninsula, Co. Cork and the glacial outcrops of North-West Scotland remember her and are her places.

REFERENCES MacKenzie (152), Ross (215).

Ceridwen. Goddess of Corn and of inspiration, she is described in *The Welsh Triads* as one of the three most beautiful women of the Island of Britain. She is the supreme initiator, the mistress of the

Mysteries. She possesses the Cauldron of Rebirth, the earliest prototype of the Grail. In it she brewed an initiatory drink which Taliesin (q.v.) accidentally tasted, receiving all knowledge thereby. She is a shape-shifter, appearing in many guises to the candidate for initiation. As a guardian of wisdom, she can assume some frightening shapes, such as that of the Sow goddess, but her purpose was to inculcate responsibility for knowledge and its uses. Echoes of her personality are to be found both in Morgan le Fay (q.v.) and with the Celtic Battle Goddess known as the Morrigan. Her roots are deep in the earth of which she is mother, and is thus best encountered at earth mounds or the generally more ancient sacred sites. She is especially associated with Llyn Tegid, Bala, in Wales, and with Glastonbury in Somerset.

REFERENCES *Mabinogion* (146), Spence (240), Graves (92), Ashe (7).

Cernunnos/Herne. God of green and growing things; huntsman, spirit of earth and birth and masculinity. He is most often pictured as seated cross-legged and with antlers sprouting from his brow, as on the Gundestrup Cauldron (149). Sometimes seen as consort to Ceridwen (q.v.), with whom he is tutelary deity of many modern witch covens. As Herne the Hunter he is depicted leading the Wild Hunt, a pack of white hounds with red ears, rather in the manner of Gwynn-ap-Nudd (q.v.) or Arawn (q.v.). He is still to be seen at certain times of the year in Windsor Park, though the tree generally referred to as 'Herne's Oak' is not the best place to seek him. Indeed he is best not sought at all, as he will certainly come of his own accord once he has scented activity in his neighbourhood. A powerful and primitive contact, who opens the eyes to the deepest levels of nature.

REFERENCES: Spence (237), Ross (215), Markale (160), Petry (198), Mottram (173).

Cronos. Oldest and first of the primitive gods. Really belonging to Classical myth, his nearest comparable Celtic figure is Bran (q.v.), but Cronos is significant particularly for his association with Britain. He was reported by Diodorus Siculus (67) to have been bound in eternal and unchanging bondage, deep within the earth of the British Isles (see chapter 2). Thus he becomes the oldest of the many 'sleeping' god archetypes, of which Arthur (q.v.) and Bran both partake. As a tutelary spirit he is extremely powerful and should only be approached with caution. It is his destiny to wake in some future

age, and since he is said to have ushered out the last great golden age of humanity's past, his eventual waking may well be the signal for a return to the ways and beliefs of that time. He is a god of earth and time, and only in the timelessness of cave or earth-mound can his presence be felt.

REFERENCES: Ashe (8), Graves (91), Powys (205).

Gawain/Cuchulainn. Heroic figures who share many aspects of the solar deities while retaining their own individuality. Both are noted for fiery temper, red hair, and for the waxing and waning of their strength throughout the day. Cuchulainn, also called the Hound of Ulster, is the more primitive figure in Irish myth, though one may catch glimpses of an earlier Gawain in the *Triads*, where he is called Gwalchmai: the Hawk of May. He becomes successively Christianized as his character develops, until in the great medieval poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* he has become an exemplar of the Christian virtues set against the evil magic of Morgan le Fay (q.v.) and the Green Knight, a far older and darker figure akin to Cernunnos (q.v.). Gawain displays only dim echoes of the 'battle madness' of Cuchulainn, who goes through physical transformation during a fight. As solar beings, both have a freshness and strength which make them excellent companions on the way, and which is easily felt in the open air under a hot midsummer sky. To some, Gawain represents the ancient Hibernian mysteries, reaching back into Pictish times, and his association with the Orkney Islands suggests an Otherworld connection, since the Orkneys were regarded as a gateway to the Shining Lands. Cuchulainn can be said to be present in Ulster especially.

REFERENCES: *Sir Gawain & the Green Knight* (233), Malory (157), *The Welsh Triads* (268), O'Rahilly (190), *Tain* (256), Sutcliff (254), Steiner (247).

Gwynn ap Nudd/Arawn/Nuada/Nodens. Gwynn is the lord of Annwn, the Underworld, and the King of Faery. He is mentioned in the *Mabinogion* (q.v.) as a companion of Arthur (q.v.) and is responsible for the carrying off of Creiddylad, the daughter of the god Llyr. He must fight to possess her every first of May, challenging Gwythyr, son of Griedawl, in a contest which is a trial of Summer and Winter. This tale is a parallel to that of Pwyll and Arawn in the first branch of the *Mabinogion*. Arawn is also Lord of Annwn, the

hunter with a pack of white, red-eared hounds – the Hell-Hounds or Gabriel hounds who are also said to hunt with Herne (q.v.). Pwyll also has to fight for his bride Rhiannon (q.v.) in a yearly contest. In the Welsh poem, the *Preiddeu Annwn* – the Spoils of Annwn – Arthur voyages to Gwynn's kingdom to bring back the magical treasures of the Island of Britain (q.v.) including the Cauldron watched over by nine maidens – an early prototype of the Grail. In the medieval *Life of St Collen* there is a meeting between the Saint and Gwynn: St Collen enters Gwynn's palace by descending into Glastonbury Tor from the top, where Gwynn's evil influence is supposed to have been banished by the application of Holy water.

Geoffrey Ashe (8) equates Gwynn ap Nudd with the Romano-British god Nodens, himself a variant of the Irish Nuada. Nodens was seen as a hunter, a woodland guardian, and a guide of souls. His temple, excavated at Lydney, has facilities for incubation – where pilgrims might come to sleep so that the god might give them messages through dreams.

Nuada Airgetlam (Silver Arm) was King of the Tuatha de Danaan (q.v.) and was so called because he lost an arm in battle. As Irish kings – and indeed most ancient kings – were unfitted to reign if maimed or blemished in any way, he resigned his kingship and was given a silver, fully-working arm by the god of healing. When this was later replaced by one of flesh, he resumed his kingship.

These related gods all have special powers of guardianship and responsibility for the land. As underworld gods, Gwynn ap Nudd and Arawn are in distinct polarization to the gods of light, but they still have a definite place in the scheme of things, and may be seen as the guardians of the winter half of the year with their Persephone-like consorts. They are patrons of the underside of things, of the psyche's harrowing, and may conduct the voyager into the deepest of inner realms. Places associated with them are Lydney, Gloucestershire (for Nodens); Glastonbury, Somerset and Neath, Glamorgan (for Gwynn); Arbeth, Pembroke (for Arawn).

REFERENCES: Ross (215), Ashe (8), *Mabinogion* (146), Rees (210), Spence (239), Markale (160).

Helen of the Roads. Goddess of trackways and ancient roads. Known sometimes as Elen she features in the 'Dream of Maxcen Wledig' in the *Mabinogion*, where she rules over the country of dreams. Known also as the goddess of evening and morning, she

performs the role of guide and instructor to those seeking the old serpent ways to the sites of arcane knowledge (see chapter 2). Perhaps one of the oldest native deities, she assumed Roman influence, and was identified with St Helen of Colchester, the Mother of Constantine the Great. One of the great old trackways in Wales is known as Sarn Helen, Helen's Road, and to follow this on foot is an excellent way to establish contact with this particular archetype. How she may assist in opening the gates to the old sites can be seen from the exercise given at the end of chapter 2.

REFERENCES: *Mabinogion* (146), Chant (48), Spence (239), Ashe (8).

Mabon/Maponus. Very little textual evidence remains for Mabon, who must take his place as the *puer aeternus* of the Celtic pantheons. He is always referred to as Mabon, son of Modron – Youth, son of Mother – and his incarceration is told of in the *Mabinogion* (q.v.) in the story of Kilhwch and Olwen. He is the primal child who was in existence at the beginning of things, and throughout the story is sought for with this question: 'Say, knowest thou aught of Mabon, Son of Modron, who was taken from his mother when three nights old?' Birds and animals give testimony of him and clues as to where he may be found, but this question is repeated over and over with sad, liturgical inquiry. The mysteries of the lost child are closely related to the Mother, the Matrona or Modron – the Goddess of earlier times – and though no personal names come down to us, the impact of Mabon and his mother is still strong. Maponus, or Divine Son, is a Northern Romano-British variant, often associated in inscriptions with Apollo. Gloucestershire is the place associated with Mabon, and Lochmaben and Lochmaben stones, Dumfries, with Maponus. Many inscriptions to him are to be found along the Scottish borders.

REFERENCES: Ross (215), *Mabinogion* (146), Gruffydd (96), Ashe (7).

Manannan/Manawyddan. He is the master of the seas, the pilot of souls who seek the way to the Blessed Isles; but his interest does not rest only in things marine. Although he is not originally mentioned as one of the Tuatha de Dannan (q.v.), in later texts he is incorporated into them. His title is Mac Lir – of the sea – and he finds his Welsh equivalent in Manawyddan, who in the *Mabinogion* helps lift an enchantment laid on the land and is one of the Children of Don

(q.v.). Both Welsh and Gaelic figures are shape-changers, visiting this world in the guise of travellers and craftsmen. Manannan's horse or his glass boat will bear the seeker to the Otherworld. He also has a host of treasures which are kept in the Crane-Bag, itself a receptacle of wisdom. His places are the Isle of Man; Emain Abhlach or Emain of the Apple-Trees which is identified as the Isle of Arran in the Firth of Clyde; and any place of enchantment which has its resonance with the Otherworld. His symbol is the three-spoked wheel or Triskel, which may be seen in the symbol of the Isle of Man.

REFERENCES: *Mabinogion* (146), Rees (200), Ross (215), Graves (92).

Math vab Mathonwy. Archetypal god of wizardry and transformation. Although he has some of the characteristics of Merlin, he is a much older figure whose brand of magic is at times both savage and unrelenting. He acts very much according to his own laws and as such is more a god-figure than a wizard. He excels in the ability to transform both himself and others into the shapes of animal or bird. In the *Mabinogion* he is responsible for the fashioning of a bride made from flowers for the god Llew (q.v.). He is guide to many mysteries and seems indeed to represent a stage of wisdom both older and deeper than most of his fellows.

REFERENCES: *Mabinogion* (146), Markale (160), Spence (240), Graves (92), Garner (84), Gruffydd (96).

Merlin. Not a god, but one of the most important figures in the Western tradition. He spans both pagan and Christian mysteries, is the prime mover behind the age of Arthur (q.v.) and stands at the heart of the Grail story. To make contact with him is to place oneself squarely at the centre of both the ancient 'Druidic' mysteries (see chapter 1) and the high Christian magic of the Hermetic way (see volume 2). Like Taliesin (q.v.) he is a contact who opens many doors: those to Atlantis, the Otherworld, the country of the Grail and the Druid way of which he is a part. There are many places where his influence may be felt (Merlin's Cave at Tintagel in Cornwall or the whole area of Marlborough in Wiltshire), but nowhere as strongly as at the hill-top site known as Dinas Emrys in Wales. Emrys is the name by which Merlin is known in certain parts of the country, and the hill is the supposed site of his first great adventure in which he revealed the meaning of the red and white dragon which lay beneath

the earth, and from where he made his first great series of prophecies (you may read the whole story and the text of the prophecies in *Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain*, 85). A lord of seashore and cavedark, Merlin is a link between many diverse forces. When sought he can be elusive, but he is prone to seek out the seeker at the most unexpected moments.

REFERENCES: *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (85), Spence (240), Markale (160), Jarman (117).

Morgan le Fay/Nimuë/Lady of the Lake. In many ways one of the most important figures of the Western tradition. As 'Morgan le Fay' she appears as a force of chaos and evil in the Arthurian cycle (q.v.) though, bewilderingly enough, she is also depicted as caring for Arthur (q.v.) when he receives his wound at the last battle of Camlan. Also present at this scene, where a dark boat appears to carry Arthur to Avalon, is Nimuë who is both another aspect of Morgan and also the beguiler of Merlin (q.v.). Together with the mysterious figure known as The Lady of the Lake, they form a triplicity which dates back to the character of the Morrigan in Irish and Welsh myth, where she is known as a battle goddess. Their roles, throughout the Arthurian mythos, are those of helper and hinderer. Thus the Lady of the Lake fosters Lancelot and provides Arthur with his magical sword Excalibur; while Morgan le Fay frequently opposes both Merlin and Arthur with her dark magic. Nimuë serves as a lure and is eventually the downfall of Merlin, but before this is a trusted confidante at the Arthurian court. Behind all these figures is a far older, darker and more mysterious figure – a mother goddess of both fearsome and gentle aspect, a teacher and guide, and a ruthless slayer and render of hopes in one. As a contact she brings with her both these aspects, and requires careful handling. She may be found on open hillsides, in thorn-trees and by the banks of rivers, dressed in a dark cloak and hood and sometimes keening for the souls of dead heroes; or as a bird, usually a raven, keeping watch from high trees or outcrops of rock.

REFERENCES: Graves (92), Spence (240), Markale (160), Malory (157), Rhys (212), Ross (215), *Vita Merlini* (276), Knight (132).

Rhiannon. Her story is to be found in the *Mabinogion* (q.v.), in the story of *Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed*. She is deeply linked with the mysteries of Mabon and Modron (q.v.) for she also loses a child,

suffers a heavy punishment and regains her former glory. She is without doubt the Welsh Persephone. Her name has been taken to signify 'Great Queen' and her cult is connected with that of the Gaulish Mare-Goddess Epona, which may itself derive from early worship of the Greek Black Demeter. Rhiannon is also the mistress of otherworldly birds whose song brings forgetfulness and perhaps visions to the listener. Her places are Arberth, Pembroke, whose mound was an entrance to Annwn; and any underground place and sites sacred to the mare, such as White Horse Hill, Uffington, Berkshire.

REFERENCES: *Mabinogion* (146), Ross (215), Gruffydd (96), Graves (92).

Taliesin. Chief Bard of the Islands of Britain, one of the 'Company of the Noble Head' (see Bran) and a magician second only to Merlin in stature. The mystery of his birth, outlined in the *Mabinogion* (q.v.) is one of transmogrification through bird and animal forms, and hides an initiation ritual at one time current in many parts of the world, in which the initiate drank a specially prepared draught which caused him to see visions and pass through differing states of consciousness. From this originate many of the surviving poems of Taliesin, to be found in *The Black Book of Carmarthen* (81), which in riddling form describe a journey through all of history. In part unravelled by Robert Graves in *The White Goddess*, much work yet remains to be done on them. Taliesin has the power to conduct the individual who establishes rapport with him through many dimensions of place and time, and through the elements themselves. He is the companion of all who tread the difficult, solitary 'narrow way' of understanding through the highest elemental contacts.

REFERENCES: *Mabinogion* (146), Nash (178), Skene (81), Markale (160), Spence (239).

Tuatha de Danaan/Children of Donn. Names given respectively to the pantheons of Irish and Welsh deities of the early Celtic period. Native gods did not normally follow the classical model of a linked family, but generally fell into separate and individual cults of local provenance. We must assume that the family of Donn or Danu were the hereditary gods of an invading people. In the Irish *Book of Invasions*, the Tuatha de Danaan are the fifth body of invaders and are themselves subjugated by the Milesians, bringing historical

chronology to the Christianization of Ireland. This shape is by no means as clear in the Welsh stories. Although traces of the Tuatha are appreciable within the Children of Donn, they are by no means identical in character or story content. This is perhaps explicable if we look at the known colonization of Western Wales, particularly at the Pembroke coast of ancient Dyfed; reminders of this time remain in the shape of forty ogham stones still standing in Wales today. Danu, Anu or Donn is a shadowy matriarch whose origins are unknown to us; she has been equated with the Indian goddess Dānu, mother of Vrtra in the *Rig Veda* (214). However we see her, she is a titanic figure, comparable to the Greek Rhea who also founded a line of gods.

The character of Danu or Donn's children is defined by their mastery of the arts, skills of many kinds, magic and fighting. They have no skills in agriculture and this function is relegated to the vanquished lesser gods. Danu is the mother of the gods; Dagda – the Good God – also called Ruad Rofessa – Lord of Great Knowledge – is the god of magic. His daughter Brigit (q.v.) is patroness of poets, smiths and women. Diancecht is god of healing. Nuadu (q.v.) is king of the Tuatha. Lugh, called *Sab d il Danach* or Prince of Many Skills, is the Tuatha's champion who finally defeats the older gods. Manaanan (q.v.), although older than the Tuatha, becomes one of their number and bestows many immortal gifts upon them. Both he and Lugh survived strongest in folk-memory after the Tuatha had been driven to the Hollow Hills when the Milesians vanquished them: they appear as otherworldly helpers to kings and heroes, Manannan in particular having an interest in the fosterage and care of unprotected children and women. Goibniu (q.v.) is the god of smiths. Ogma, surnamed Grian-ainech or Sun-Faced, is the god of poetry and writing; the invention of the magical language known as Ogham is ascribed to him.

The Welsh Children of Donn are particularly distinguished for their magical skills. They appear within the *Mabinogion* in the story of *Math, son of Mathonwy*, where their influence upon events turns the world upside down. Gwydion (q.v.), described as a son of Donn and nephew to King Math, is the arch-mover and magician. With his brother, Gilfaethwy, he starts an intrigue which kills Pryderi, Rhiannon's son (q.v.). This may well indicate the suppression of an older family of gods, as Rhiannon's origins are of the Underworld and therefore closer to the beginning of things. Gwydion's sister Arianrhod (q.v.) gives birth to two sons, Dylan, son of Wave, whose

nature is one with the sea, and Llew Llaw Gyffes, Llew or the Skilful Hand, the equivalent of Lugh Lamhfada, Lugh of the Long Arm, in the Tuatha. Arianrhod puts upon him an insuperable *geasa*, or prohibition, that he shall not marry a human of mortal stock. As a result Gwydion and Math make a woman out of flowers, Blodeuwedd, Flower Face, for Llew. But she betrays him, and Llew, who cannot be killed outright, transforms himself into the shape of an eagle. Blodeuwedd is herself turned into an owl as punishment for her betrayal, while Llew is returned to mortal shape. Owls are to this day called by her name in parts of Wales.

A convention of early Christian Ireland had members of the Tuatha appear to monks or hermits to relate their deeds and get baptism so that they could pass out of the Hollow Hills into the Christian heaven, showing how strong the hold of these archetypes was even after their reign was supposedly over. Those who walk the inner realms of the Western Way are likely to meet with any or all of them, and may find them both helpful or hindering according to their natures. They are, so far as this may be understood esoterically, our native Titans.

REFERENCES: Rees (210), Ross (215), de Jubainville (64), MacCana (149), Garner (84), *Mabinogion* (146).

Wayland/Govannon/Goibnui. Three types of the one figure: the Smith of the Gods. An immensely strong deep-rooted contact, he is said to offer to shoe your horse if you have the right payment to offer; and he may also open the door to the underworld where he is a King in his own right. Wayland's Smithy in Berkshire has the strongest associations with him. He is interesting in that he is almost the only Saxon deity who has remained active, assuming the roles of both earlier Welsh and Irish gods. This is an indication of the special position accorded to smiths, who were the first Makers and knew the mystery of iron – the origin of the folk-belief that witches and fairy-folk cannot cross a threshold protected by 'cold iron'. Wayland shares many affinities with the ancient Green King, the Man of the Woods, who leads always to the deeper levels of lore. He is also said to have made many magical weapons, including, in all probability, Arthur's sword Excalibur.

REFERENCES: Branston (28), Hayles (106), Graves (92).

Most of the beings discussed above have a place in the great

mythological cycles of the West: the cycles of Arthur, of Fionn, the Ulster Cycle, and the Four Branches of the *Mabinogion*. Each of these requires considerable study and really deserve whole books in themselves. All that we can do here is indicate, however partially, their essential qualities, which include some of the most profound mysteries of the Western Way. Knowledge of these cycles is essential for anyone wishing to follow that way: its characters and stories are all gateways to other realms which the present-day neophyte should be able to wander in and out of at will. Some tried and tested methods whereby this can be achieved will be found later on in this chapter, but before that we append a brief discussion of the individual cycles and their inner meanings.

The Arthur Cycle. The most familiar to most people of the four cycles to be discussed, due to its enduring fascination for all ages and kinds of men. The stories of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table are really a loosely-knit body of myth, legend and hero tale drawn from Celtic, French and Germanic background, elaborated and re-elaborated by countless authors down the ages. From the height of the myth's popularity in the Middle Ages we have the image of a band of mail-clad knights, lead by a mighty king, advised by the wise seer Merlin, going in search of love and battle on the one hand, and of the Holy Grail on the other. They stand for many of the noblest aspirations of human endeavour, the need to create harmony out of chaos, to preserve what is most worthy, to aspire to the highest possible ideals. Thus the cycle as a whole probably contains the widest possible spectrum of human love, folly, desire and attainment. Arthur is the noblest of men and stands for the very stuff of the land – indeed he *is* the land and is thus depicted as sleeping in caves beneath it until called upon to return and succour the human race. Guinevere, rash and human in her impetuous love of Lancelot, yet stands for an older, feminine mystery (see Knight, 132), as do many of the figures of the cycle, some already mentioned, such as Morgan, Nimuë, Lunet, Lionors, Dindrain and Isolt. Their counterparts, the great knights: Galahad, Gawain, Perceval, Lamorack, Gareth – their names, like their deeds, are legion – each stand to some degree in relation to the Western mysteries. As companions on the way they can be powerful guardians, guides and exemplars, endlessly fascinated by the modern world as by their own. They have become invested with timelessness by the unending interest lavished upon them; and they respond well to direct contact in meditation or

dream. Once contacted, you may find that a single knight or lady will attach him or herself to you, acting as an escort throughout your daily life, both magical and mundane.

Because the basis of the mythos is Celtic, Germanic and even Atlantean, working with the Arthurian cycle can be particularly rewarding, leading as it may to one or more of the inner realities of these cultures. For those who become concerned with the mystery of the Grail, knowledge of the Arthurian stories is essential. The adventures of the Grail seekers and the intimate understanding of the esoteric Grail kingdom possessed by many of the romances are without equal as a guide to these often bewildering places. The mystery at the heart of the Grail is service, and each of the knights who achieved that mystery possesses the ability to help and instruct us in our path to the place where the Wounded King awaits our coming as eagerly as he has for time beyond measure.

Arthurian source-books abound, and there are several good histories and bibliographies to help the seeker into the dense woodland of Arthurian Britain. A select list will be found at the back of this book. Nor should fictional retellings be ignored: many contain great insights from which we can learn, and are included for this reason. A more detailed consideration of the role of modern storytellers will follow later in this chapter.

The Four Branches of the Mabinogion and related stories, known collectively as the *Mabinogion* (146) – ‘Mabinog’ translates as ‘youth-tales’ – really consist of two separate though related kinds of material. The Four Branches themselves, *Pwyll Prince of Dyfed*, *Branwen Daughter of Llyr*, *Manawyddan Son of Lyr* and *Math Son of Mathonwy*, form a loosely knit cycle of tales, written down in the ninth century but incorporating material from much earlier times. They are the earliest ‘complete’ myths of Britain – though they were garbled and rewritten by Christian monkish scribes who made such changes as are hard to reconcile with original material. None the less, they are a rewarding source from which to quarry the stuff of the mysteries; for nowhere else will you find such complete delineations of the native god-forms.

The remainder of the tales grouped under the heading of ‘Mabinogi’ are more disparate, consisting of several Arthurian stories, generally believed by modern scholars – Loomis (144), Brown (31), Bromwich (268) – to be copies of Mediaeval French poems by Chretien de Troyes (though this is by no means necessarily

true), as well as a very primitive Arthurian tale *Kilhwch and Olwen*, which contains some of the earliest material extant of the whole cycle; and two primary mythic stories: *The Dream of Maxcen Wledig* (see chapter 2) and *The Dream of Rhonawby*, both of which contain material of a significantly early kind. The collection is completed by the story of *Lludd and Llevellys*, which relates to the dragon myths and to Merlin; and the very important *Hanes Taliesin*, omitted from more recent editions of the texts because of its ‘difficult’ and fragmentary nature. It can, however, be found in the original edition by Lady Charlotte Guest (146) and should certainly be read for its magical and initiatory content.

Unlike the Arthurian cycle, the overall bias of the *Mabinogion* is towards the heroic rather than the chivalric. Despite a thin overlay of later material, it is here that will be found the earliest and most primary matter of the native Celtic mythos. In one of the three Arthurian stories *Peredur son of Evrawc*, is to be found the most primitive form of the Grail legend; in another, *The Lady of the Fountain*, the atmosphere is very much more magical than in Chretien de Troyes’ elegant French version (54). In *Geraint Son of Erbin*, the third of the pieces, the same holds good. However the material came to be transmitted, it is manifestly older than the medieval versions from which it is assumed to depend.

Finally in this context mention must be made of the loose body of gnomic material known as the *Triads* (268). These are a form of mnemonic used by the old story-tellers and bards to preserve the principal themes of their extensive repertoire. Thus the ‘Three Disastrous Revealing’, or the ‘Three Golden-Torqued Bards of Britain’, would immediately recall the stories associated with them – sometimes a brief, shorthand version was appended, and as many of the stories have perished, they offer tantalizing glimpses of a world of which we know all too little. Indeed one of the best exercises we know of for becoming familiar with the native god-forms is to take one of the *Triads* and use it as a theme for meditation. You may be surprised at the amount that can be ‘recovered’ in this way, and at the insights it can throw up in your daily life.

The Fionn Cycle is similar, though lighter in tone, to the Ulster Cycle (q.v.). Fionn MacCumhal is the captain of King Cormac MacAirt’s band of *fiana* or heroes. They roam the countryside of Southern Ireland, and much of the cycle is taken up with their adventures. Admission to the band is restricted to those who can achieve all kinds

of physical feats, such as when the candidate has to run through a forest and not displace a hair on his head or a branch of a tree, or to be able to draw a thorn from his foot while running but without slackening his pace. The candidate was expected to be accomplished in the arts of poetry as well as fighting. The parallels with Robin Hood (q.v.) and his band are not hard to draw. As in the Ulster cycle (q.v.), the story is brought to a tragic close because of a woman: Grainne, the intended wife of Fionn, runs away with his best friend, Diarmuid, to Scotland, where they live an idyllic if temporary life in the wilds. The close links with both the Arthurian stories and that of Kilhwch and Olwen (*Mabinogion*, q.v.) are particularly clear, as are those with the Tristan and Isolt legends. Fionn himself is an initiate after the Manner of Taliesin (q.v.), having touched the Salmon of Knowledge while cooking it for his poet-master. This gives him immunity from his enemies (poets enjoyed exemption from attack) as well as access to the Otherworld, with which he is still connected in folk-tradition. Oisín, Fionn's son, is made to survive right up until the Christian era, when he meets St Patrick and relates to him the deeds of the Fiana. Like all the more primitive myths discussed here, the heroes of the Fionn cycle make fine companions in the investigation of the native magical sites and areas of the country.

REFERENCES: Rees (210), MacCana (149), Sutcliff (253).

The Ulster Cycle. As the Fiana are to the South, so are the heroes of his cycle to the North. Indeed the warlike character of Ulster, still apparent today, has its roots within the Ulster cycle of related stories. Here, we are still connected to the high days of the Tuatha de Danaan (q.v.); but if the Tuatha represent the Golden Age, then the heroic tradition of Ulster represents the Silver Age. High deeds, honour, heroic codes of behaviour put us much in mind of the Trojan Wars as described by Homer. In the Ulster cycle people are placed under severe *geasa* or are subject to ill-wished enchantment which restricts their actions to such a degree there can only be a tragic outcome. Ulaidh, ancient Ulster, was ruled by Conchobar mac Nessa, whose court was at Emain Mhacha, near the present day city of Armagh. In his court are the champions and heroes who together form the Red Branch Knights: Conall Cernach, Fergus mac Roich and, most famous of all, Cuchulainn, whose exploits form almost a cycle in themselves (q.v.). The fate of Ulster is tied up with tribal feuding, particularly with the rival court of Queen Maebh of Connacht. The

most famous tale is that of the *Tain Bo Cuailnge*, the Cattle Raid of Cooley, after which Cuchulainn is killed by the magic of the Morrighan – the primal Cailleach (q.v.) whose malice stems from the time before even the Tuatha de Danaan reigned (q.v.). Related stories in the cycle are *Deirdre and the Sons of Uisnech*, which has its parallels with the *Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne* from the Fionn cycle (q.v.), in which the beauty of Deirdre and the honourable and impossible *geasa* imposed on those about her form the basis for the subsequent tragedy of Ulster. *Bricriu's Feast* and *Mac Da Tho's Pig* are humorous interludes in which the heroes have otherworldly adventures and very real humiliations. The former story has the first instance of the Beheading Game, which later appears in the medieval *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (233) attached to another Cuchulainn-type hero. The Ulster cycle as a whole remains one of dark vengeance and proud honour, and is perhaps the most difficult to work with in the present time.

REFERENCES: MacCana (149), Rees (210), *Tain* (256), Sutcliff (254).

Robin Hood. Probably better known to cinema audiences than to students of the esoteric, Robin Hood or Wood is none the less an important figure in the Western mysteries. Originally a spirit of the woodlands of Britain, he is a supremely English character. His beginnings are lost in the mists of time, and have become overlaid with a doubtful historical figure known variously as Robin of Huntingdon or Robin of Locksley. A series of ballads dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries outline the adventures of the great outlaw of Sherwood Forest: a small cycle of tales involving such picturesque characters as Little John, Will Scarlet, Alan à Dale, and Friar Tuck; many with older and darker selves become little more than dim memories by this time. Robin is very much a man of the people, an equalizer whose image still reappears in contemporary figures such as the solitary masked avenger of injustice. As a contacted archetype he opens the mystery of woodland and shadowy overgrown glades. He is deep and quick and eager to lead those who follow him upon new and surprising paths. With Maid Marian as his consort he rules over the woodlands of Britain like a Faery King.

REFERENCES: Holt (112), Child (53), Vansittart (272).

MODERN MYTHOGRAPHERS AND STORY-TELLERS

The Native Tradition possesses no authorized book, no Holy Scripture which succeeding generations may quote from, refer to and use as an index to living. Instead there are the primal myths, archetypal situations and themes strung together on a loose framework and exemplified by characters in the guise of Gods and Goddesses, angels and demons, heroes and lovers. Texts such as the Bible, the Koran, the Popol Vhu (204) or the Vedas, once they are formalized, remain virtually unchanged: they are there to be referred to at any given moment in time. Myths, however, continue to grow and change. They are open to endless reinterpretation. James Joyce can make us see Ulysses anew by setting him down in modern Dublin. The seemingly endless repetition of Greek or Arthurian myths from the Middle Ages onward further proves the point. The themes contained therein are endless and timeless and reach the most profound depths of human experience – the same which gave them birth. These are the roots of story, the preserve of myth and archetype, whether of the legendary birth of a hero or an individual response to the crisis in Northern Ireland. The art of the story-teller is to reach the deepest possible level, and all true practitioners of the art can be recognized in this way. By doing so they both preserve and add to the layers of meaning which each successive generation finds in the bedrock of the original story.

As we saw in the first chapter, the shaman/priest was the first myth-maker – and the first story-teller. Drawing on their immediate experience of the Otherworld and its archetypes, and of their own inner reality, they gave birth to the first myths. Thereafter the stories and events relating to these myths became the core of religion, of the mysteries and the tribe's place in the scheme of things.

But, as with any story that is told more than once, the myths acquired accretions and additions, as more and more people embroidered them into complex retellings. While myth remained the province of the shaman/priest, and was thus considered sacred, the story was for everyone. Later this was to change, as the subject matter became debased into legend and fairy story and finally into nursery entertainment. But no one doubted the power of the word. Ray Bradbury's famous Science Fiction novel, *Fahrenheit 451* (26), tells of a future time when books are forbidden as subversive elements in society: they stimulate the emotions and give an entirely different view of the world from that accepted by the administration.

In Bradbury's story various people take upon themselves the task of learning and remembering a whole book, word for word, so that the story will not be lost. They each become a 'living' book. This state of affairs seems far-fetched perhaps, yet this is exactly what the ancient story-tellers did – learned a story by heart, which could often last for several weeks in the telling, and thereafter gave the story at important tribal events. This tradition remained until recently in Ireland and the West of Scotland, when the demand for such long stories ceased with the advent of radio and television. A particularly sad fate for the story-teller became the lack of an audience:

There came a time when it was but rarely that he had an opportunity himself of practising his art in public. So, lest he should lose command over the tales he loved, he used to repeat them aloud . . . using the gesticulations and the emphasis, and all the other tricks of narration, as if he were once again the centre of fireside story-telling . . . On returning from market, as he walked slowly up the hills behind his old grey mare, he could be heard declaiming his tales to the back of the cart (210).

This almost extinct tradition stemmed from the highly organized repertoire of the professional poet, whose duty it was to learn up to a hundred and fifty stories in the course of training. These stories were classified into categories which were considered suitable for recitation at certain events. Classifications such as destructions, cattle-raids, abductions, conceptions, visions, voyages, invasions, and so on. As each story was considered to carry the element which particularized it, and which communicated itself to the hearer, the story was usually told at an event in keeping with the tale related. Thus the *Wooing of Emer by Cuchulainn* would be recited at a wedding or betrothal. The traditional blessing, curse or abjuration often went with its telling and this element seeped into medieval literature, where the reader was warned against altering a word of the story or shortening it, and where a blessing is included to 'one who hears these words and keeps them'.

The words of the story are therefore words of power which the unskilled must beware of tampering with. Hence the opening of many stories with the formula 'This story is a true story and I had it from X who had it from Y. Whoever doesn't believe me had better go from this company than hear the story unbelieving.' The power of the word to this degree has remained with scriptures and sacred writings of all people. Even today among unsophisticated Muslims a

strip of paper with a surah from the Koran is considered more effective as a healing agent when bound about a wound than a piece of sticking plaster. The Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred book of the Sikhs, is treated as a living being and consulted accordingly; while Hindus still go to a priest in time of trouble to have some verses of the sacred writings read over them.

We accord stories little of this respect. The word 'fiction' when applied to stories has become a term of scorn. If it is fiction, then it is not factually true, goes the argument. Yet the lives of many are held in thrall today by the power of the soap-opera – itself an immensely long story which lasts many nights in the telling. When a character in a soap-opera is about to marry or is killed, the audience feels delight or pain in proportion to the amount of identification shared with that character.

The story certainly still has power when it is heard, read or enacted. It is character-forming, as the hearers subtly alter their own life-style to accord with that of the hero or heroine of the piece. The story is nurturing, feeding our hours of leisure now as once it blotted out the reality of the long, cold, dark nights of winter, when the story-teller was a welcome guest, treated like royalty and given the best the household could supply, or when the old ones with long memories were called upon to tell again the stories of long ago:

One of the ancient wise ones of the tribe comes to take his place. Around his neck hangs the string of bear's teeth, numbering the tales he knows. He may carry his own drum or an apprentice may carry it, one who is learning the tribal tales and the act of telling them. The drum sets the rhythm for the chanting; it marks the pauses; it beats gloriously for the ending (224).

The literary or 'high' telling has always been a major part of story-telling: the poetic lamentations of Deirdruí in Alba, the intricate descriptions of Helen of Troy in Homer, the *entrelacement* techniques of the Medieval romancers, or the multifaceted narrative of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (72) all share this style of storytelling. Likewise, there is room for the family saga: from the *Nibelungenleid* (187) to the *Forsyte Saga*, they possess the same attraction. So too with the adventure story, whether of the Voyage of Bran or the latest journey of Tim Severin (229). Tales of war from the *Tain Bo Cualigne* (256) to the Battle for the Falklands, both stories of reaving of one kind or another, show that the themes return incessantly to the classical definitions of story.

Truly there is only a handful of stories and all are variations of THE STORY. The folk-tale, from 'Get up and Bar the Door' to the latest television situation comedy has a permanent appeal, dealing as it does with the common experiences of life; awkward situations always appear funnier to the hearer than to the subject, and the story-teller has to make his audience laugh as well as cry.

The power of the story may well be discounted among the ranks of the wise and powerful, but its staying power will outlast their rule. They may try to bend it to the uses of propaganda, but the result is not of long duration. Governments that behave as in *Fahrenheit 451*, banning and censoring the publication and dissemination of books, discover that the story has its way of escaping, as we see from the experience of samizdat-underground literature – passed from hand to hand in rough photocopied format, or more subversively circulated orally to be chuckled over at street corners.

Stories never die; they change. The new folk-legends, such as that of the Phantom Hitch-Hiker or the UFO kidnap, are a well-established phenomenon now – later versions of the mysterious guest. Likewise the poltergeist-haunted council-house is only the latest haunted-house story. So, whilst we must not fear too greatly for the demise of the story, we must beware of the passing from memory of those orally-transmitted tales which are our heritage. They are easily overlooked or undervalued in an age which writes everything down or stores it on computer-disc, and as a result suffers from a poor memory. But if a time should come when many are unable to read, then Ray Bradbury's vision might well become reality, and the classic novels and stories of our literature the subjects of a new oral tradition.

A much greater fear is the loss of the miraculous dimension from the literature of the future. If some cultural commentators were to have their way this would have happened long ago. They have already succeeded in banishing much that was of great value to the seeker to the realm of the children's story or the nursery tale. There is at present an apparently endless demand for pulp-fantasy and the various genres of Science Fiction. But these are pilloried by the establishment and those who write or read them are accused of 'escapism', of burying their heads in the sand and refusing to acknowledge the 'real' world. Yet, as we have seen repeatedly, the kind of reality – perhaps of super-reality – offered by the endlessly unfolding dimension of the Otherworld, by far transcends anything to be gained from watching a dozen episodes of the average soap-

opera. The Otherworld, of which the great traditions – both Native and Hermetic – are a major expression, possesses a timeless and dimensionless reality, in which the archetypes of the kind investigated by Jung (123), Rank (208) and their like, range freely and have their being. Modern mythographers such as ‘A.E.’ (219), W.B. Yeats (291), George Macdonald (150), J.R.R. Tolkien (263) and C.S. Lewis (142), have all written from a deep understanding of this archetypal reality – hence the phenomenon of their popularity. Individuals react violently towards such literature, loving or hating it according to their awareness of the reality upon which it draws.

Beneath this is a very fundamental problem. ‘Mankind cannot bear too much reality’ said Eliot (73), while both Lewis (141) and Tolkien (264) have written warnings of the way in which our very humanity is undermined by those who insist that to believe in anything that cannot be seen, felt, or heard is both childish and demeaning. This is not the place to argue the point fully, but it should be said that those who bury themselves in the daily round of one-dimensional reality – whether in their living or their artistic appreciation – who cannot bear the reality of their inner lives, are least fitted to follow the way of the Western Mysteries – though paradoxically they stand in the greatest need to do so. As one of the best writers of contemporary fantasy literature, Richard Monaco, commented in a note to a recent book (170):

Some of us confuse fantasy with escape from reality. . . .
Escape? But to where? Into your own mind and images, in the end. And you’ll have to deal with the facts and fears, agonies, frustrations and hopes . . . the quest that leads towards inner freedom and an intensity that brings more joy and real passion than you’ll ever find in any literature of daydreams.

He might have added that it is this confusion between escape and escapism that lies at the root of much that is amiss with our present society. In entering the inner realms we are not running away or hiding from the outer world, but rather seeking to deepen and enrich our awareness of a multi-dimensional universe. Fantasy opens our lives. It is a laboratory where the alchemical possibilities are tested and tasted first. It is the magical waking of our lives. This is the quest of which Richard Monaco speaks: the search for the reality behind the Gods and inner archetypes of the Otherworld. Whether you come to them through the myths of Greece or the adventures of the American folk-hero Coyote, through the legends of Arthur or the

strange wild myths of the Celts; or become attuned through the modern myth-based techniques of Psychosynthesis (10) or the dream workshops of Progoff (206), Whitmont (285) or Spiegleman (242), you will find yourself led inevitably to the realm of the Otherworld and the figures of the gods who rule it and their servants. There are as many entrances as there are stars in the heavens – indeed some of those stars are themselves entrances – some of which we will be discussing in the next chapter. The way of Story is one entrance only, but an immeasurably valuable one: for through it you may make your first encounter with the landscape and characters to be met with again and again on your quest. Someday you may even encounter the Lords of Story themselves, to whom tradition gives the origin and shaping of all stories, myths and tales, told in the light of the campfire or found in the pages of an ancient book or some new myth-oriented saga of sword and sorcery. It is they who control the destiny of the creative artist, constantly shifting and redefining the perimeters of the archetypal worlds. They are guardians of experience and the shapers of beginnings and endings. To meet them is to encounter fear and joy in almost the same breath and in equal measure: not unlike the feeling when one takes the first step beyond the boundaries of the ‘real’ world into that endless and timeless place where all adventures and quests begin and end, but where paradoxically there are no final beginnings or endings at all, only a timeless flux in which all shapes and forms have their origin, and where the mysteries of creation itself are kept. As the Irish mystic and visionary ‘A.E.’ wrote, of the moment ‘When inner and outer first mingle’ as ‘the bridal night of the soul and body’:

A germ is dropped from which inevitably evolves the character and the psyche. It is a seed as truly as if it were dropped into earth or womb. Only what is born from it is a spirit thing, and it grows up and takes its abode in the body with its other inhabitants, earth-born or heaven-born (218).

These are things still far from the start of the quest. Perhaps you have known them already without recognition; perhaps you never will. But you may be sure that the search will be endlessly challenging, and that though you grow weary in its pursuit, you will never really want to give it up, once you have begun.

EXERCISES

EXERCISE 6 MEETING THE GODS

In this exercise you are going to attempt to establish a rapport with an Otherworld character. Begin with a figure for whom you feel sympathy. It need not be one of those listed in the gazetteer. It can, for example, just as easily be a saint as a god or hero; but whoever you choose you should begin by reading as much about him or her as possible. Become familiar with his story and, if you can, any sites especially associated with him. (Where possible, indications of this have been given in the gazetteer.) If there are no sites, try to think what kind of place you would expect to find him at: by a river or lake, on mountain or hillside, in woodland or on cliffs overlooking the sea. But always remember that he or she can be anywhere – in your own front room as well as in a wild and desolate place in the open. (Your Otherworld character may be male or female; when we use the male pronoun it is for clarity only.)

Begin to use your imagination to visualize how your chosen character would look: how he would be dressed, what colour hair or eyes he might have and so on. Gradually build up a picture in your mind – draw it if that helps – but take your time: these things do not come easily and you have all the time in the world at your disposal.

When you feel that you have a good visual image that can be called to mind at a moment's notice without effort, go to the site you have previously selected. It may be necessary to go there quite often to begin with, until you get the feel of it. Preferably it should be deserted, apart from any friend you may take with you; but if this is not possible (as for example at one of the major sites which are seldom deserted, even early or late in the day), do not worry. All you have to do is sit, or stand, quite casually, and bring to mind the character you have been building up over the past weeks. Do not be surprised, or disappointed, if nothing happens at first: these things take time. You may, if you wish, make up a chant containing the name of the character you have chosen, repeating it silently or aloud as circumstances permit. Or you might read over some familiar passage, or a poem you have written or enjoyed which is to do with the subject in question.

After a time you should begin to get 'flashes' of insight about the character in question, who may even begin to 'speak' to you. But, if you have taken your time building up the image in your mind, this will seem quite natural. Because there is always an exchange between inner and outer worlds, some of what you have put into your visualization will have been supplied from the inner reality, and this will make the image all the more vital. You should find that after a time you build up a consistent rapport with your chosen subject, and that he will begin to guide you further into the realm of which you are a part. This can be one of the most rewarding experiences open to us today, and is in fact an exact correlative of the way in which our ancestors worshipped. In this way, you are establishing a bridge or gateway between the worlds which will ever after be open to you.

However, a word of warning. Many energies are being unleashed in this way which have been unrepresented for centuries: earth energy, Native Wisdom links, and ancestral potencies which bring with them remembrances that can be helpful to our present time (see chapter 2). While it is perfectly allowable to make contact with the vital energies, there is always the danger that unregenerate forms may emerge also. These have to be allowed to depart, and should not be held onto for the sake of native traditional old times. Many of those old times were not good times, despite memories of the lost Age of Gold. Life was too near the survival point for highly evolved energies to manifest. Those energies and their representative god-forms which can still operate have been listed in this chapter: no element of pagan worship need necessarily be applied to them. Mediating their energies is, however, of prime importance. Those who visit ancient sites often remark that the stones are lonely, or that the earth is hungry – subjectively perceiving the kind of rites performed there once. It is one thing to awaken a site and another to close it down again. Our suggestions are concerned with awakening, purging if necessary, and operating these centres effectively for the good of all comers.

First contact with an ancient site may be frightening or at least very powerful. Whatever your religion, whatever the energy you are used to mediating, invoke its protective influence if you feel threatened or that something is out of balance. It often happens that after initial contact and awakening a huge rush of primeval energy is released. You should concentrate on this dispersing harmlessly into the atmosphere as a vapour. The ancient sadness of some sites is due to loneliness or isolation of an important energy and this will be willing

to co-operate with the initiate who is able to mediate it objectively. This mediation will often be felt in small, insignificant ways throughout the months which follow your visit, and it should be carefully meditated upon to sift for its real usefulness for this time-scale.

Finally, always remember to dismiss your contact after you have spent however long you desire in his or her company. This can be easily done by some formula of your own devising. But never leave the impression of your chosen figure behind, as this can be disturbing to other sensitive visitors, and may make the continuation of the rapport you have begun to establish difficult.

Any impression that you have picked up a compulsive or obsessive contact should be swiftly acted upon. If you are experienced you should be able to patiently sift the contact and control its impatience to get working. The less experienced should ritually sever the contact and return it to the earth – it is possible that a more experienced person will be able to synthesize this energy at another time.

To sever such an obsessive contact, take a cleansing bath of salt water, make contact with the god-form or energy which you are used to working with and ask for assistance; request the troublesome contact to leave you, firmly and compassionately, remaining emotionally objective. With a small glass jar or cup-shaped stone before you, imagine your breath to be a circle of light which surrounds you: when you breathe in, your circle of surrounding light is flooded with blue; when you breathe out imagine the contact and any other negative energy leaving your system, beyond the pale of your blue circle of light. See it enter the container before you: a circuit of ten breaths should be quite sufficient. Carefully take the container outside and bury it in the earth where it will be neutralized.

With these precautions in mind you may pursue a rewarding relationship which will teach you a great deal and help you in your quest for further knowledge of the Western Mysteries. But remember that the gods, as we have tried to show, are also formalized 'pictures' of archetypal energies. To contact them also means to contact the energy they represent; a reality beyond the outer god-form. This also has to be worked with and assimilated before a full understanding of the gods is reached. When once you have made a direct contact with one of the rulers of sea, sky, or earth, these elements, which surround us but which are often seen as separate from our daily existence, will never again seem other than an essential part of experience. To know them is to be initiated, in a way both ineffably simple and hugely complex, into the mysteries of life itself.

CHAPTER 4

Voyages to the Otherworld

Facilis descensus Averno;
Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis;
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est.

Aeneid vi, 126

Smooth the descent and easy is the way
(The Gates of Hell stand open night and day);
But to return and view the cheerful skies,
In this the task and mighty labour lies.

trans. Dryden.

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

From libretto of 'The Immortal Hour' by Rutland Boughton,
text by Fiona McLeod (William Sharp)

THE ANCESTRAL PARADISE

We have spoken about the Otherworld throughout this book, but what do we really mean by this? Our perceptions readily inform us about the physical reality of our world, but they are less capable of telling us much about other realities, especially metaphysical ones. This is a facility we have lost or neglected since the Foretime. Shamans, mystics and visionaries have always had access to the Otherworld, just as unsophisticated, 'primitive' people have been aware of the Dreaming. The truths of the Western Way do not lie in

the self-evident reality of this world, although those truths are exercised in Middle Earth, as we can term the physical plane of existence; the wisdom of the West lies deeper than surface reality, in the Inner or Otherworld, which has its correspondence in inner states of consciousness. The Otherworld is a reality, but each generation has found its own metaphor to describe its existence: ancestral place of the dead, earthly paradise, heaven, happy hunting ground, hell, the land of faery, the astral plane, heightened consciousness and the collective unconscious – all these terms are applicable to describe the Otherworldly reality which has been perceived in many cultures as a place, condition or after-life abode. Because exposure to metaphysical concepts leads to a sense of unrelated confusion we would like to make a broad distinction between the kinds of reality as we will be viewing them.

There is now such a multiplicity of jargon connected with psychological states and cosmological conceptualization relating to different spiritual schools of thought, that we have avoided the usual terminology for the sake of simplicity. We would wish to distinguish three states or worlds: the world of here and now, or physical reality, which we term Middle Earth; the metaphysical world, or psychic (astral) reality, called the Otherworld; and the Spiritual Realm which is the abode of imageless Deity. These are crude distinctions which do not take into account the overlapping and interdependent nature of humanity, the ancestors, angels and gods, but let them stand first of all as representatives of a many-layered understanding.

In the Foretime, Otherworldly concepts were bounded by the realm of the ancestors, the Underworld. This chapter is headed by the famous warning of the Cumaean Sybil to Aeneas as he attempts to journey into Hades to consult with his dead father: the descent is easy, but the return not so (116). Shamans trained long years to make this very journey to the ancestors, a journey that was fraught with danger and from which they must return with ancestral advice for the benefit of the tribe. The dangerous encounters were so real that the shaman's drum, like the Aborigines' tjuringas mentioned in chapter 2, often depicted an Underworld map, charting the landmarks, showing both helpful and unhelpful spirits and, importantly, the way of return, often indicated by a personal symbol. The Underworld was understood to have an entry which bordered Middle Earth; often this was a cave-mouth, or a semi-dormant volcanic fissure such as Aeneas descends into at Lake Avernus, the birdless entrance to the classical hell. As the bones of the dead were

buried in the ground it was natural to assume that they took up residence under it, in the Underworld. Most native cultures have an Underworld tradition of their own: Norse mythology, which is closest to northern shamanic practice, has Niffheim; Classical, Canaanite and Sumerian mythologies shared the view of a miserable, dreary Hades, full of twittering ghosts; while the Welsh Underworld, Annwn, was a chthonic, powerful place full of mighty ancestors. The idea of the Underworld as a place of judgment for an evil life was foreign to the Foretime; it was merely the place to which all the dead went, unless the infringement of some tribal law condemned the deceased to wander as a lonely ghost, outlawed from the tribe even beyond death.

The powerful and effective interaction of the Underworld with Middle Earth has been persuasively argued by the writer and musician Bob Stewart in his book, *The Initiation of the Underworld* (248). He has explored the British Underworld tradition by means of shamanic entry-meditation over the course of many years and has shared his experience on a tape, entitled *The Underworld Journey* (312). The immediacy and power of this primal experience puts one in touch with the ancestors in a manner which cannot have been equalled since the Foretime. The Underworld is the basis and foundation of the Otherworld reality: it is the deepest stratum of native consciousness where we meet with the most uncompromising inhabitants. Stewart prefers not to call them 'archetypes', because that implies a set of psychological personae, implying unreality. Like the Gods (see chapter 3), the Otherworld and its inhabitants are real *in their own worlds, in their own right*, they are not the result of imaginative or mental states; for although, as we shall see, their forms often vary between cultures, there is a close correspondence in the ways in which they are perceived.

Otherworldly cosmology is not easy to grapple with. It is dependent upon the manner of its perception. We rely on travellers' tales, those reports of the shamans' journeying: we remember that 'people listened to the poets and heard the versions of those who were thought to have penetrated the veil' (116). One factor emerges from listening to these tales: Otherworldly travel was at the heart of many mythologies.

To take Underworld descents, for example: these formed a genre of their own in Classical Greece, the *katabaseis* (116), but accounts of such descents are present in every tradition. We have already spoken about Aeneas' descent for information, but visiting the

Underworld is for a deeper reason than mere curiosity. Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess, like her earlier prototype, the Sumerian Inanna, descends to the Underworld to release her beloved from the realms of the dead where she undergoes a ritual stripping and death herself. Ishtar's experience is like that of Norse Odin who hangs nine days and nights on the ash-tree, Yggdrasil, as an offering to himself:

Myself given to myself
On that tree
Whose roots
No one knows . . .
Into the depths I peered,
I grasped the runes,
Screaming I grasped them,
And then fell back

This is the experience of the shaman and is at the heart of the mysteries: a costly self-discovery which brings knowledge and power by means of initiation in the Otherworld. The World-Tree, Yggdrasil, has its roots in each of the three levels we have spoken about: in Middle Earth, in Hell, and in Asgard, the place of the gods (60) Odin learns eighteen runes in all, giving him knowledge from each of the three levels, but especially from the realm of the dead. The central tree is the axis about which the Otherworld, in all its appearances, is set out. The tree appears, in different guises, in many of the exercises in this book and is a vital image for both Native and Hermetic Traditions (59). It is the tree of life, death and rebirth; it is the shaman's pole or ladder (100) and the qabalist's ladder of light (93); for Christians, the Tree of Knowledge in Eden and the Tree of the Cross are of one wood.

Parallels between Odin, Ishtar and Christ are easy to point to: each suffers death and transformation upon a tree, gaining knowledge of the dead or release of the dead by this means. The Underworld visitant's passport is desire for another's good: love kills death. Gilgamesh and Orpheus both journey to the Otherworld to release their friend or wife, respectively. Quetzacoatl returns from the Underworld with the bones of previous generations in order to create a new race, at great cost to himself (138, 40). Christ harrows Hell in apocryphal tradition (4), which is consistent with native Underworld traditions throughout the Western world. The toll of Underworld visiting is high, as old Vainamoinen, the Finnish hero, found. He visited the dead in order to learn charms which would magically

finish the boat he was building. He says nothing about his visit but warns:

Do not, future people,
Do not, former people, set out to get charms from Death's Domain
. . . many have gone there,
not many come back . . .
from the eternal cottage of the Abode of the Dead (126).

What can be achieved in Middle Earth must be done by ordinary means first: curiosity is no passport to the Underworld.

The gods and heroes who visit the Underworld to redeem the dead are frequently written off as fore-runners of the later saviours of revealed religion, but it is important to remember that each of these figures embodies tribal responsibility at every level of history and consciousness, fulfilling a task, outside of time, which is vital for every people, in every age. The place of the ancestors is not seen in a fearful light. For the Jews, to die was to be gathered to Abraham's bosom: this expression found its native level in the Christian era when to die was to go to Arthur's bosom. Sleep and death are but the first impingings of Otherworldly travel; but they are exploratory journeys and, unlike those of the trained shaman, undertaken without control. The ancestral abode of the Underworld serves as the basis for further exploration, but it should not be utilized as an excuse to contact the recently deceased, as in spiritualism; rather it should serve as an opportunity to contact the vast reservoir of collective ancestral wisdom. The Underworld is powerful and potentially helpful to anyone upon the Western Way, if it is approached in this spirit.

It is easy to think of the Underworld as 'down', but we must never forget that directional participles are inapplicable to Otherworld realities: we merely employ them with regard to metaphysical planes in order to give us some relation to the Otherworld. This confusion over the Otherworld's positioning appears in many cultures. Hy Brasil, Avalon, the Hollow Hills, the Blessed Isles, Summerland, Faeryland are all conceived of in these relative terms – they are distant, but not so distant that it would be impossible to travel thence (8, 175). In the Foretime, heavenly and paradisaical places were not conceived of as somewhere in the sky; they were firmly situated in the earthly sphere, in the place beyond the sunset, ever-westward, where the light is always that of twilight. The Celtic Otherworld tradition is particularly rich from internal evidence of mythological

texts and folk-story, but it is significant that the Greeks referred to the British Isles as Hyperborea – the Land Beyond the North Wind – where the Titans still lived, the place to which they had been exiled. The Greek poet, Pindar, spoke of these islands in connection with the initiate's journey:

All who have endured three times
In a sojourn in either world,
To keep their souls utterly clean of wrong,
Go by God's road to the Tower of Kronos,
Where the Airs, daughters of Ocean,
Blow round the Island of the Blest (200).

Plutarch's description of the Fortunate Islands:

Rain seldom falls there . . . they generally have soft breezes
. . . the air is always pleasant and salubrious (165)

was enshrined forever by Tennyson in his *Idylls of the King*, where he puts these words into Arthur's mouth:

I am going a long way . . .
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly (259).

It is a place to which not only the dead go, but where heroic mortals live still in the fullness of their powers; it is the place of traditional learning and wisdom, where springs the well of inspiration. While none of the Celtic Otherworlds has an exact geographical location, they are thought of as somewhere in the Atlantic. But neither this nor the strong Atlantean tradition which has exercised its fascination since the time of Plato need imply a physical island which fell in some historical era, but can point rather to Otherworldly remembrances which have slipped from psychic into earthly realms (77, 132). Atlantis, like Eden, was a place of inspirational knowledge which was kept *in potentia*. The Fall of Man is concerned far more with banishment from or cessation of communion with the Otherworld, than it is with the consequences of sinfulness. This realization has been the impetus for interior exploration in every time and place, among every people; a realization of an essential birthright which it is possible to contact. For, alongside official pronouncements about heaven and hell, there have ever flourished the Everliving Realms which have been preserved within the native tradition. The official

way to heaven is often cold and legalistic, but the Native Tradition has ever preferred its own familiar ancestral places and ways.

Paradise is not synonymous with heaven, however. It has its roots in the Persian *paerodaeza*, meaning park or enclosed garden. But paradise is an apposite synonym of the Otherworld – an intermediate state between incarnation and bliss. The enclosed garden and island-paradise are therefore primal states, interior realities where every vital component of life is in potentiality. It still has its first wildness, yet it has its own grace and rules of governance. There is no human trickery or deception here – nor will such debased coins serve in our transactions with the Otherworld. It is a waiting place, a place of learning and nourishment. The happy Otherworld is an earthly paradise in many legends, a place where feasting and love continue harmoniously. The Celtic Otherworld tradition is distinguished by the fact that it has no Hell, nothing parallel to the classical Hades with its grey emptiness. Although the Underworld is present in good measure – represented by the Hollow Hills and the Faery Realms – the Celtic Otherworld retains its ambience of joy. It is aptly described as the Fortunate Island, the Honeyed Plain of Bliss, the Apple Island and the Summercountry: all set somewhere West of the sunset in the mighty ocean.

Otherworld travel to these islands was such a noticeable feature of Celtic life that the poets coined a special genre of stories about them, called *imrama*, or voyages. The most famous of these was the *Voyage of Bran, son of Febal, to the Land of the Living* (165), which describes the travels of Bran and his companions, their arrival at an Otherworldly island and their sojourn in the Land of Women. It tells how, after a short time, one of their number becomes homesick, and they prepare to go home. As they reach the shore they are hailed and asked to identify themselves:

'I am Bran the son of Febal', saith he. However the other saith;
'We do not know such a one, though the Voyage of Bran is in
our ancient stories' (165).

The man who leaps ashore becomes as dust, leaving Bran and his companions to sail away. As in Keat's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, the traveller who seeks to return from Faery wakes from too long a sleep 'on the cold hill's side'. We will be speaking more about Otherworldly travellers, and this time-discrepancy.

Why did the voyaging stop? The Otherworld did not go away, though conceptions of it narrowed or accommodated themselves to

Christian cosmological patterns; we can say that the Otherworld went literally underground, sometimes fusing with the ancestral Underworld, sometimes withdrawing itself, as it did in Scotland and Ireland, into the Hollow Hills, where the Otherworld and its inhabitants carried on interacting on the level of the folk-soul, but never quite disappearing from consciousness. The voyaging, the walking-between-the-worlds continued, but secretly and in fear of persecution or ridicule. The energies which had once been worshipped in the Foretime, and which had engodded streams and hills, put on ragged clothing as disguise, while in the Otherworld they were revealed as they really were – the Shining Ones whose power was still respected, whose help was still sought by those who knew them. The Otherworld might shrink to the appearance of a grassy mound, and its inhabitants to rustic elementals, but the reality of Faeryland was more virile than anything envisaged by those who looked hopefully for diminutive fairies at the bottom of their garden (130).

When the Gods speak of themselves, a different picture emerges:

We are from the beginning of creation
Without old age, without consummation of earth,

says Manannan mac Lir, the Otherworldly king in the *Voyage of Bran* (165). He speaks about the inhabitants of the Land of the Living: it is to these Shining Ones that we turn next.

THE SHINING ONES

I have always made a distinction between pictures seen in the memory of nature and visions of actual beings now existing in the inner world. We can make the same distinction in our world: I may close my eyes and see you as a vivid picture in memory, or I may look at you with my physical eyes and see your actual image. In seeing these beings of which I speak, the physical eyes may be open or closed: mystical beings in their own world and nature are never seen with the physical eyes (283).

So speaks an anonymous Irish seer, interviewed in the early part of this century by Evans-Wentz for his book, *Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*. He perfectly describes the method by which Otherworld

beings are perceived. Although there is a definite interaction and communion between Middle Earth, the Otherworld and the Spiritual Realms, the five physical senses are not employed: rather a state of inner vision is required. However, this should not imply that Otherworldly beings, the Shining Ones, are unreal. As the seer says, they belong 'in their own world and nature'. But what are they? There have been many theories; they are alternatively conceived of as a folk-memory of a small native people, a remembrance of a mighty priesthood, remnants of forgotten gods, immortal heroes, or the ancestors. As we have already seen, the ancestors play a great part in Underworld theology, and, like the gods, they are a force to be reckoned with. More recent psychological theory, particularly Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious, has suggested that the Shining Ones are nothing more than archetypes – collective, formalized energies which inhabit our psyches. There is some truth in all these theories because it is normal and natural for every people to find their own metaphor for a condition that is understandably difficult to express in human terms. We leave it to the reader to find the most acceptable method for understanding's sake, as long as each remembers that archetypes may inhabit the Otherworld as well as the psyche, that the Shining Ones are real in their own world and not the inventions of a disturbed mind. While it is currently acceptable to speak about the possibility of life on other planets, life on other levels is dismissed as nonsense.

We have suggested in chapter 1 how deity is formalized: a gradual image-building which grows in power and effect in relation to the visualization of the group-soul. Similarly, in our discussion of the god-forms of the Native Tradition, we saw the importance of the latent power of the elements which crystallized into the *synthemata* of the gods. Deity or pure spirit has no form and for it to have any communication with humankind it must assume an acceptable form or symbol. There is no way any of us can escape the language of symbolism which lies, sometimes deeply hidden, within our cultural and genetic memory. In the Foretime the world was visited and guarded by homely and familiar spirits whose manifestations came in numerous forms and varying gradations of intensity. The Otherworld beings range from the psychic equivalent of animals – the elementals – right up to highly evolved spirits whom we know as gods, with many variations in between which we might call angels or tutelary spirits. Some native Otherworld traditions have lost access to the full range of the Shining Ones through a shifting religious

focus: elementals are usually the first to suffer. It is a truism to state that the gods of an outgoing religion become the devils of the incoming one, but it should not be forgotten. The potent god of the hunt or of the Underworld was associated latterly with God's opponent, the Devil, although the magnificent antlers of Cernunnos were derived from a totally different symbolic basis than those of the Devil. Horns, once synonymous with power, became associated with evil (58). The female spirits of wells and springs, conceived of originally as beautiful women, became dragons, water serpents and sirens. The guardians of the wood became malevolent ogres, just as the potent earth forces as personified by the dragon became debased. Whenever people neglect their dependence upon nature, this inversion of symbolism occurs. The elementals go wild and cannot be persuaded to give help.

Mechanised instruments of slaughter and harvest now complete the picture and typify the degradation of the Shepherd of Flocks and John Barleycorn: it is no wonder that field and forest are haunted by neglected elementals, and that wanderers are prey to ghosts which cannot find their ancestral abode. But there are more evolved beings within the Otherworld. We have spoken at length upon the gods and the many forms that they take. Some have made more successful translations to the modern world than others because their aspects and symbolisms remain vital to our world. The gods, as well as elementals, are dependent upon humankind, but after a different manner. Whereas elementals misbehave and run wild, the energies which have been formalized under the appellation of gods withdraw themselves for a time. It is impossible to say whether or not these energies return to the source of Deity ready to come again under different guises, or how long they remain in abeyance awaiting the restimulation of human attention. We believe that they are available, on tap, to those who familiarize themselves with their 'call-sign', their symbolism. The true gods are those Lordly Ones on a higher arc of evolution within the Otherworld; the opportunity to meet them is now rare and the encounter often frightening. Like Platonic forms, these are the primal forces personified: vast storehouses of a particular kind of energy. Exposure to the gods has left many mad or deranged, which is why contacting the primal forces is best left to the priest or shaman, or through the medium of earth-contact and carefully programmed meditation as we have suggested in chapter 3. It is also important to contact only the regenerate forms appropriate to modern consciousness, rather than the unregenerate forms used in

the Foretime. This is where the Otherworld journey can help us: here the *essential energy* of the god-forms is available and contactable.

The gods may not choose to manifest themselves and should not be commanded in the same way as elementals who are our younger kindred. Similarly their energies should not be allowed to overwhelm you. When travelling in the Otherworld it will be noticed that there are no blurred edges to reality there. The inhabitants are, if anything, realer than in Middle Earth. To a weak personality the gods may appear as distillations of everything known and experienced, a primal pattern to which they must submit. Or there may be a superimposition of one reality upon another so that the traveller is bemused as was St Peter on the occasion of the Transfiguration (St Matthew 17: 1-13). He, a human being, had been taken up Mount Tabor by Christ, an incarnate god, and both were visited by Elijah and Moses, two Otherworldly entities: no wonder he was all for setting up camp for the four of them! Levels of consciousness, or different world realities, can be confusing. As we have already said, the uncharted realms of the Otherworld demand a good guide or inside contact, and this is the prerequisite for Otherworld travelling.

There are as many means of perceiving the Otherworld as there are guises of its inhabitants: these depend upon the Native Tradition of a people. We cannot hope to cover the full variety any more than we can present a complete map of Otherworldly travel, although we want to help you contact your own tradition. Every potential traveller needs a guide, and these are available and contactable. Call them angels, spirits, guardians or daimons, we each have access to a personal guardian. Suggestions on how to contact yours appear in exercise 7, Contacting the Guardian.

We do not all aspire to become shamans, magicians or mystics – for most of us the duty is to fulfil our vocation within the boundaries of a job, home and family. But something of a collective responsibility is being felt more generally – call it a pressure from the Otherworld to an inner evolution. The way to inner, spiritual growth is greatly desired and though many methods are available, not all are suitable or practical. A personal grounding in Other or Inner world living is the most precious experience which can promote spiritual growth within its own limits or serve as a basis for a more collective religious adherence or spiritual evolution. The inner guardian is the initiator for each of us. It need not be Mother Bunches in her rags or Black Elk in his rain-cloud suit, but someone familiar to whom we have never given a face; an inner voice or secret companion may be

the link for you. The ancient teachers may be dust, but our voyages need not be rudderless. The inner guardian is our true North, the keeper of the charts, and the way shower. He or she is one who has already trodden the paths we are walking for the first time. Just as the shaman in the Foretime made Otherworld visits to his totem-spirit or ancestor for teaching and guidance, so can we draw upon the wisdom of the guardian. The seemingly modern notion that after death and a suitable number of incarnations humankind progresses to the angelic condition to become teachers in the psychic world can be found in many traditions of some antiquity.

'Poets say truly that when a good man dies he has honour and a mighty portion among the dead, and becomes a daemon, which is a name given to him signifying wisdom' (201, 'Cratylus'). The word *daemon* means 'he who apportions' (116): the guardian who allots experience to each of us. But does this imply that Otherworldly inhabitants have already plotted our course – that we are not free agents? Each individual has a destiny to fulfil, a task, a spiritual purpose which is nothing to do with hoarding up pious devotions but about bringing through, by individual effort, that work of creation which is still to be achieved. The Otherworld borders on the Spiritual Realm from which emanates the blueprint of creation: the guardians, like the angelic hierarchies we shall be meeting in volume 2 of the *Western Way*, are those who promote our creative potential, feeding us with the life-experience each of us needs to be an effective human being. This still leaves us free to co-operate with our potential or to avoid it. There is no fixity of destiny, we are free to make our own way.

The guardian acts as an ambassador of the Otherworld; his or her task is the Otherworldly equivalent of the shaman's – to explore Middle Earth and consult with individuals in this world. In volume 2 we shall meet this interpenetration of worlds again.

Contact with the Otherworld changes one's life forever. Once a pattern of communication has been established the inner life is vastly enriched and this, correspondingly, has repercussions on Middle Earth, and the outer life. But before we go on to discuss how we can travel, let us look at some Otherworldly visitants and the methods others have used to travel there.

Many have used a special symbol or token as a passport: Aeneas plucks the Golden Bough which he has to present to Proserpine in the Underworld; similarly, Bran, son of Febal, has a Silver Branch of an apple-tree. These are obviously both scions of the axial tree of life

around which the Otherworld rays out. In Irish poetic tradition the gold or silver branch was actually an item of shamanic regalia borne before a poet of high status, signifying his connection with Otherworld wisdom and teaching. The silver branch of Rhiannon brought sleep and respite from Middle Earth, making mortals forget how long they had been in the Otherworld. Very often music is a factor in Otherworld transactions. The Faery Folk often teach faery music to musicians who sit patiently near their dwellings in the hollow hills. This aspect is particularly strong in British faery lore where Otherworldly tunes presage the arrival of the faery host: mysterious music is often heard near the haunts of these potent Otherworld beings who bear no relationship to Victorian fairies.

Music and dancing are often linked. In the Algonquin story of Algon the hunter, the hero finds a circular pathway on the prairie, worn as though by many feet, although no footprints can be found outside this area. Hiding himself in the long grass he hears music which becomes louder and he sees descend from the sky a host of star-maidens in an osier chariot. They alight and dance, and he captures one to be his bride (241). The Otherworld parallels between America and Britain are readily apparent as we see also from the story of another Algonquin brave whose wife dies. Like Orpheus, he determines to find her. An old man tells him, 'To reach the Island of the Blessed, you must cross yonder gulf you see in the distance' (241). He finds himself in a glass canoe and his wife in another: they row towards a wooded isle set in the middle of the water like an emerald set in silver. This glass boat features also in Celtic Otherworld travel.

True Thomas, or Thomas of Erceldoune is a border ballad which tells of how Thomas the Rhymer met with the Queen of Elfland who conducts him thence, pointing out the landmarks. He is so apt an apprentice that

He has gotten a coat of the elven cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And 'til seven years were past and gone
True Thomas on earth was never seen (53).

He is not the only Scot to have vanished. Michael Scot, the twelfth century scholar, also vanished after a life of seemingly fabulous length and achievement. His posthumous reputation as a magician was so widespread he entered the folk-imagination as a type of Merlin. A seventeenth century clergyman, Robert Kirk, who documented the experience of seers and faerylore of the Scottish Gaelic-

speaking people, never returned from an expedition to Faeryland; although his gravestone is exhibited at Aberfoyle, there is nothing under it (130). These were, of course, Master-Men – those who had contacts with Otherworldly beings and who were seasoned travellers in other realities. They were the inheritors of the shamanic tradition, long after the Foretime was over. People are nowadays kept alive for years on life-support systems, or are refrigerated against the coming of more sophisticated technology, so who are we to say that these men have disappeared? Years in Middle Earth are but days in the Otherworld – perhaps their visits are not yet over or, like Elijah and Enoch, they have not tasted death but have passed on to the role of Otherworldly helpers.

Visitants from the Otherworld have also been reported in Middle Earth. The legend of the Green Children tells of how two children with green skin were found wandering in the vicinity of a cave during the reign of King Stephen: they would eat nothing but green, vegetable food. The boy died but the girl learned to eat ordinary food and so lived. She said that the land of their origin was a place where the sun never shone but where the light was that of twilight or sunset (30).

More often, the Otherworldly visitant is taken as a lover. The ghostly or demon lover is a theme which runs throughout world folklore. The dybbuk of Jewish legend, the medieval incubus and succubus, the seal-woman of Scottish and Scandinavian story all testify to close communication between the worlds. The Otherworldly lover and the earthly partner must observe certain prohibitions if the relationship is to work: the true appearance of the Otherworldly being must never be revealed, the earthly lover must never speak unkindly or demand that the other eat of or dress in the sacred totem animal. To mix physical plane sexuality with astral plane polarity, to confuse the worlds or to fall in love with a shadow is disastrous (see chapter 5). The misplaced fantasy of Otherworldly origin causes trouble in human living, so a clear understanding of the levels is necessary. We will be seeing later on in volume 2 how the partnership of Otherworld and Middle Earth beings acts as a positive device of visualization and power. Let us now examine the ways in which we can travel. The Otherworld level is rising into consciousness once more: it will prove a vital link between tribal and cosmic consciousness, enabling the necessary evolution to come about and facilitating the speedy release of unregenerate forms from the Native Consciousness. Learning to become a traveller in these

realms will connect our spiritual and hereditary yearnings, as well as helping us to cope more effectively with the experiences of Middle Earth.

PASSPORTS TO INNER REALMS

The Otherworld reality stands at the centre of the Western Way. Its appearances may shift, the traditions merge, yet the way stands open for you to join those who have conversed with the dead, had the knowledge and conversation of their holy guardian angel, or been given the means to spiritual wisdom. This can be done through meditation and we urge you to find your own metaphor for the Otherworld, and to explore your own inscape. Because of each person's unique background and ancestry there will be as many approaches and entrances to the Otherworld as there are individuals: you already possess your key or symbol (see exercise 1), and the Two Trees entry-meditation (exercise 8) will lead you further into a landscape which is your own, where you can work on getting to know your guide (see exercise 7). Your journey will be both unique and at the same time similar to that of others. Comparing notes may not be helpful as every person enters at their own level. There can be no 'right way' to travel. Lone individuals take their own risks as well as having their own adventures, while others may prefer a package holiday under the auspices of a mystery school which supplies maps and ready-made guides for the cautious.

Why travel at all? This is hard to justify to the pragmatic and self-determining realist who acknowledges no world beyond Middle Earth and no other evidence than those of his five senses. The feeling of self-delusion can be very strong. Guides and gods may turn up in confusingly modern guises. The right amount of control is sometimes hard to establish at first, but aim for a waking state of consciousness, with controlled breath and breathing. With practice you will enter the Otherworld and meet with your guide and others. You will discover your destiny, your guiding theme, your inner impulse to act creatively, which you can then experience and fulfil within Middle Earth and your everyday existence. The images and encounters will be elusive as dreams at first, but you will learn to record and remember. The concentration required to make and hold contact can be wearing at first, you may even go to sleep. But because your experience of the Otherworld fades between sessions it does not

mean that the Otherworld is a shadow, any more than familiar but long-absent friends are shadows without reality.

There will be days when Otherworld travel is easy. At other times it will seem that the two-way swing door is jammed and will only open outwards onto this side of things. The doors do shift, of that there is no doubt, but you will always find them. As the children in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* are told:

I don't think it will be any good trying to go back through the wardrobe door . . . you won't get into Narnia again by that route . . . don't go trying the same route twice. Indeed, don't try to get there at all. It'll happen when you're not looking for it . . . and don't mention it to anyone else, unless you find that they've had adventures of the same sort themselves (142).

Some times are more suitable than others, but when you have mapped out the approach, you do not need to go through the whole customs procedure again. While Otherworld travel has been described by us in terms of meditation, it can equally well happen during sleep, in day-dream, initiation, vision, astral travel, during loss of consciousness and near-death states. Two famous examples of this latter experience occur in *The Vision of Aridaeus* (163) and the 'Vision of Er' (201, *The Republic*), when experiences of the Classical Otherworld, both Hades and Elysium, are described by one who is thought dead and afterwards revives to tell of this. Modern examples of this kind of recollection are manifold (107). The many-textured mantle of consciousness can be both waterproof and workaday, or become an invisible cloak, depending on our needs.

Contacting our native Otherworld is not to neglect our own world, but to sensitize the whole being to its requirements, seeing the earth as a living entity whose interdependence is as much upon the Otherworld as ours is in Otherworld beings, the Shining Ones. The scale of evolution is vaster than we ever realized, as the new science is beginning to discover: as mystics, shamans and philosophers have been telling us for ages.

To co-operate with the Otherworld fully we need first to look at ourselves. The maxim, 'Know Thyself', stands squarely in the front of each individual bent on walking the Western Way. This injunction is essential: it is a task which will never be finished. If we fail to clear ourselves and attempt a deep exploration of the Otherworld we will inevitably meet with our own worst qualities personified. If we are capable of recognizing and working with our own worst traits we

may explore the deeper hinterlands of the inner worlds. We cannot be glamourised if we know ourselves, but we will begin to appreciate how we fit into the scheme of things, and how the Otherworld can help us to achieve our destiny. But human nature being what it is, no sooner have we cleared our psychic attics of the lumber stored there than we start accumulating more. The Augean stables will perhaps never be entirely clear, but we can at least try to keep them to manageable proportions. Some suggestions for self-clarification can be found on p. 151.

The primal importance of Otherworld travel is to go and to return. There have been many who have been lost in the mazes of the Otherworld, who wander beglamourised, no longer in touch with themselves but led by the will-o-the-wisp. The glamour of spiritual and psychic work leads many astray (15). Unless we are well-earthed in the physical plane, unless we first of all make our commitment to the path of the hearth-fire and organize our lives to a satisfactory standard before approaching esoteric paths, we have a tendency to drift off. This is why many esoteric schools insist on the attainment of a mature age before accepting candidates. Unless the individual character has first developed in Middle Earth to be an effective human channel of communication, the Otherworld traveller is apt to be weak and easily swayed by everything he or she meets. It is as important to make a stand against anything which seems contrary to one's own integrity in the Otherworld as it is in Middle Earth. The Otherworld is peopled by archetypes whose energy is distilled to great strength. The help of the inner guide and the use of one's own common sense will guard against coming totally under the control of one of the Shining Ones for, while we should never forget that we can help achieve the Otherworld's purposes for spiritual evolution, we must never lose sight of our earthly responsibilities. The touch of the Shining Ones is sometimes inhuman because their purpose does not take into account the individual: their collective energy is towards a common end, a cosmic purpose. Any Otherworldly attempt to influence your life-direction in a sweeping and off-hand manner should be met with firmness and integrity. Refer to your personal guardian and to your highest spiritual resources.

If we look at examples of Otherworldly travel we will see that, if certain rules are observed, the traveller will meet with no harm. Those who fall into Faeryland by mistake are saved by their possession of salt or iron – the elements of earthly life which are not the common coinage of the Otherworld. Boasting of their offspring's

talents or beauty – gifts of the Otherworld – causes incautious women to lose their children to the faeries who leave in their place a loathly changeling as a lesson. Attempts to avoid hard work are met with more hard work on the Otherworldly side of things by the elder sisters who wish to share their younger sister's good fortune when she returns home from Mother Holle's house covered with gold (95). Pride, curiosity, improvidence, ingratitude and dishonesty disqualify the traveller; whereas obeying the rules, observing common-sense precautions, behaving with humility and straightforward courtesy enables the traveller to journey far. Most often the impediments to safe travelling lie with the traveller. Aragorn's advice to Boromir who distrusts the idea of going to the paradisaical realm of Lothlorien in *Lord of the Rings* is sound. When Boromir complains that 'few come out who once go in; and of that few none have escaped unscathed', Aragorn replies, 'Say not unscathed, but if you say unchanged, then maybe you speak the truth. Only evil need fear it, or those who bring some evil with them' (263).

Human faults are amplified in inner work and can create obstacles. As with the hero of a folk-tale, we have to face a series of dreary tasks which reflect our unprepared and untrained nature, tasks which must be accomplished before the hand of the princess can be achieved. But any achievements we make are not to be reserved for our own use. This is revealed nicely if we contrast the example of Galahad, the later Grail hero who, after his achievement of the Grail, is assumed to a spiritual state at the city of Sarras and dies to the world for ever, with Peredur or Perceval, the earlier Grail hero, who after his achievement returns to the world, becomes a Master of Grail tradition, one who teaches others. To travel *and to return* with the gifts of the Otherworld is our destiny (162).

The idea of the Otherworld providing mortals with gifts, the Faery-Godmother who bestows blessings and creative propensities upon the newborn child – these are valid concepts which provide us with further clues to the Otherworld's ability to recharge Middle Earth with vital and redeeming energy. We are each gifted with the ability or aptitude to do certain things. Some of us perfect these abilities, becoming the creative artists who fructify the folk-soul of the people, others never work with their aptitudes so that they become stale and unmanageable. Our lives are only effective in so far as we bring through energies from the Otherworld and earth them by creative effort in this world. In each generation artists make this mystical journey into themselves and return charged with new life

and purpose: this is how Otherworldly teaching is disseminated – not by overt teaching methods, but through song and story, play and film. These innocuous methods of transmission have a sweeping influence on all levels of consciousness. It is therefore imperative that that transmission is in the hands of those who know what they are doing.

The seedbearers within each generation receive the impulse and transmit their art by every means of creativity known to them: so the torch passes from hand to hand. The vocation of the artist is truly a holy one: those who fulfil that vocation with humble awareness of the debt they owe to the Otherworld are the true artists of our generation, not the self-vaunting, self-seeking egoists whose art merely reflects themselves. But for all of us the Otherworld call remains to be fulfilled. The sudden insights which arise without our bidding, the overwhelming urge to create some new thing out of our abilities, the sense of fulfilled destiny resultant from these urgings – these are clear signs of our allegiance to the common work.

For the gods have hidden and keep hidden
What could be men's livelihood (109)

and it our duty to find out for ourselves what we can best do in Middle Earth.

PARADISE LOST AND REGAINED

Without access to the Otherworld, Middle Earth becomes a sad, dead place. Today in the West our common perception of it is repressed to a level dictated by both Classical and Christian fundamental concepts – demons, ghosts, evil spirits and witches are the sole inhabitants of the modern Otherworld – one whose joyless, souless face can be seen almost any night as represented on videos of Satanic manifestation and alien interference. This is not the true Otherworld but Shadowland, a mere mirage of an inner reality whose gentle, healing power is deflected, represented by images of violence and sickening horror. The way between the worlds has never entirely closed, but obstructions have been put in front of it and many no longer believe it exists. Those for whom heaven is a Victorian myth and Hell an ever-present reality are cut off from the guiding mythology of the Otherworld. Without trust in the Spiritual Realms, the Otherworld and the Underworld, we become a prey for

threadbare doctrines, of despair: and their increasing hold on the world spreads still, counselling doubt and destruction. When we stop praying for the dead, for those in purgatory, for those in the ancestral places, we begin to fear ghosts and unhoused spirits (32). When we cease listening to the voice of our inner guide, we hear the temptations of our worst side. When we cease to fulfil our spiritual aspirations, God becomes Devil.

Into this vacuum of doubt and uncertainty many new Otherworld scenarios have sprung which have been grasped despairingly, hopefully, longingly. God as an astronaut and interstellar, supervisory visitants seem to be new metaphors of the Otherworld for the modern age. Others grasp at psychological discoveries which seem to parallel shamanic experience but which often remain theoretical in their application to life. Some, grown weary of the bland Otherworlds proclaimed by Church, Synagogue and Mosque, look East to find more satisfying paradigms. But though the native Otherworld tradition looks dead, it is far from defunct. It informs each of the new Otherworld concepts still, from the same source.

Those who look to alien intelligences to help our world overcome its mistakes and save them from the tentacles of technological disaster, may find the old Shining Ones returning. If travel to the Otherworld is now confined, in popular imagination, to space-travel – the new *imrama* – may the paradisaic islands not relocate in the stars as we look outwards rather than inwards for help? We may consider the constellations as the star-gates of the Otherworld, which mediate its archetypal forces, and which also have their mundane correlatives upon the earth itself (see exercise 5). It is possible that the purgative experience of psychoanalysis may put damaged psyches in touch with their own inscapes again where they may converse with Otherworldly archetypes. There is no doubt that Eastern techniques, themselves derived from valid spiritual disciplines, can stimulate our own Native Otherworld Traditions, although these need to be recast into the appropriate Western metaphor.

Otherworldly realms and their inhabitants can translate to other countries and cultures, by means of spiritual heritage and blood-lineage. Celtic immigrants brought their faery folk, the People of Peace, with them to America and Australia, although each of these countries have their own native Otherworlds in Red Indian and Aborigine cultures. It takes a long time for the Otherworld to establish itself, as John Crowley says about America in his novel about the Otherworld, *Little, Big*:

We as a people are too young to have cultivated stories like those told of Arthur, and perhaps too self-satisfied to have felt the need of any. Certainly none are told of the so-called fathers of our country; the idea that one of those gentlemen is not dead but asleep, say, in the Ozarks or the Rockies is funny but not anywhere held. Only the despised ghost-dancing Red Man has a history and a memory long enough to supply such a hero (61).

But the rediscovery, begun in the last century, of our folk heritage and its Otherworld tradition continues. The movement known as the Celtic Twilight produced at one end a never-never land woven of unrealistic yearnings, and at the other a broad and informed picture of the Otherworld whose proponents included the great poet, W.B. Yeats, and the mystic, 'A.E.' (George Russell). Their genius and vision inflamed the whole Celtic world and is still the basis for many fantasy novels whose authors glimpse, through them, the gleams of paradise. In other countries folklorists collected the last remnants of native traditions before the last story-teller forgot his craft. Antiquarians and poets began to realize the importance of their heritage: in all too short a time the living links with the past would be dead. We must not imagine that professionals and experts on folklore will record all this for us. The Otherworld traditions of many living cultures are in danger. In the last century and well into this, many Red Indian tribes lost their own links, were hounded into extinction or second-class citizenship. The vital impulse of these traditions has, fortunately, been preserved or revived, but in the face of unprecedented opposition and systematic rooting out of cultural identity. The move is on in Australia, motivated by the Aborigines themselves, to transmit their life-style and their access to the Dreaming to those members of their people who have no place in the white man's ecology. And everywhere the guardianship of native earth-sites and holy places is taught, along with transmission of the Otherworld tradition. This is heartening, but we cannot afford to be complacent about our own traditions.

An understanding of the Otherworld is essential within the context of the Western Way, or, indeed, any spiritual tradition. It is the basis from which all mystical writings grow. The Otherworld focuses the spiritual experience of seers, prophets, shamans and visionaries, who in turn inspire followers. Without a vision the people perish, yet there is never any shortage of a spiritual vision. The rediscovery within each generation of Otherworld reality has

been the impetus of spiritual life. Spiritual wisdom does have a common source, even if its Otherworldly apparatus is perceived and interpreted in so many diverse ways, according to cultural requirements.

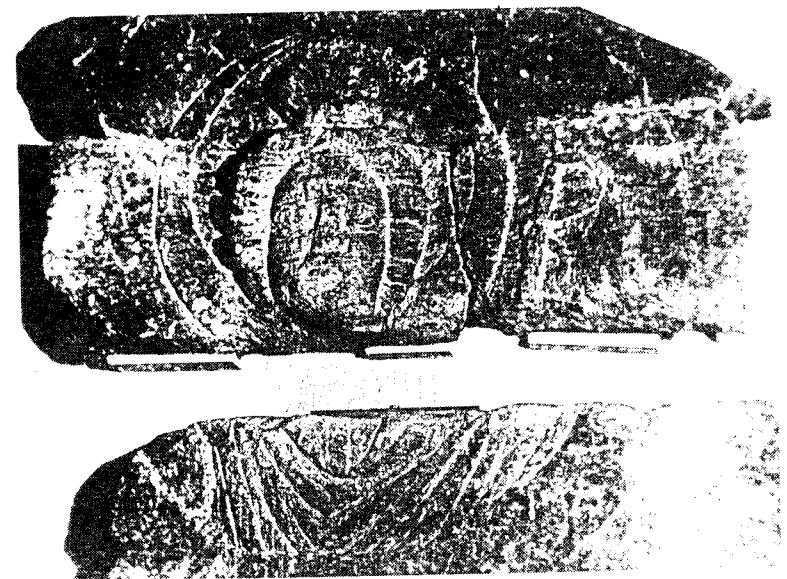
Our part in this transmission of tradition is vital. We travel to the inner home, to which we are silently called, and from which we journey out again into our ordinary lives, bringing with us that which we have experienced. It cannot be spoken about in words, but it can be communicated by gesture and attitudes which are apparent to others on deeper levels than any of us realize. Without the influence of the Otherworld, the Western Way would be a dead-end, its travellers merely armchair esotericists. The Otherworld call is heard by many who have no means to come to it consciously, although they visit it in dreams, day-dreams and visions. They read about it and yearn for it: 'Jerusalem, my happy home, when will I come to thee?' It is the longing of the heart to have a permanent home, an interior place which is bright and unfading in its delight. The longing for an earthly paradise has led many to explore the unknown Middle Earth, to stake a claim in holy places, just as Muslims, Jews and Christians have all claimed Jerusalem as their own. But the earthly paradise cannot be secured by armies; it is an exploration which leads in a totally different direction (162) And at its finding a different kind of homage is rendered. We are apprenticed to the Otherworld, just as the Shining Ones themselves are but journeymen to the Spiritual Realms which lie beyond.

The native Otherworld tradition is generally overlooked as a means of spiritual realization, but we present it side by side with the ways of revealed religion and hermetic esotericism which we will examine in volume 2. As Dante explored his three worlds of Purgatory, Hell and Heaven with his guide, Virgil, so with our guide we can pass through the seemingly complex time-scales of the Otherworld, meeting ancestors, archetypes, gods, angels, faeries, people dead and those yet to be incarnated. We can exclaim, with the seventeenth century English mystic, Traherne:

A stranger here
Strange Things doth meet, Strange Glories See;
Strange Treasuries lodg'd in this fair World appear,
Strange all, and New to me,
But that they mine should be, who nothing was,
That Strangest is of all, yet brought to pass (265).

The path to inner enlightenment and the journey outwards to actualize the realization is a long, painful one, fraught with many failures. But the journey is worthwhile. It is the only journey.

Take ship for your blessed islands, go there, learn wonders and mysteries. Voyage, but *come back*.



EXERCISES

EXERCISE 7 CONTACTING THE GUARDIAN

The beings you meet in the Two Trees meditation (exercise 8) are guardians, but they are also general guides who post you onwards to the next experience; they do not assume any responsibility for you. The personal inner guardian is perhaps closer than you think, although many are not in touch with theirs. We all have one, call it daimon, inner companion, guardian angel or guide: the guardian's role is not to keep you from experience but to initiate you into experience which will stretch you. Each guardian acts on behalf of his or her own guide — an inner teacher of great spiritual wisdom who has his or her being in the spiritual realms, but who can sometimes be encountered in the Otherworld. The collective wisdom of these teachers can be contacted within the Two Trees meditation, as well as within other spiritual disciplines. This interlinking chain of responsibility is seldom taught in the West: angels, like faeries, have become optional within the spiritual ecology. And although it is still common to appoint godparents to a new-born child, creating a spiritual kinship and mutual obligation, the function of an inner guardian is now almost entirely lost sight of.

The golden age of childhood gives us our first introduction to the guardian when a secret companion is formulated, visualized as active within times of quiet play. This image retreats at adolescence to be replaced by what the Jungian school call the anima or animus: the female and male psychic counterparts of man and woman respectively. Not everyone is aware of these inner influences which formulate themselves within the imagination according to cultural and experiential colouring. Everyone finds his or her particular metaphor, symbolism and imaginative clothing for the guardian, although they might not refer to it by that name. Others are aware of an unformulated inner voice or conscience, or of a watcher. If you have experienced any of these within your life you are already in touch with your guardian. But if you have not?

Sit in meditation. See before you a full-length mirror in a frame. Approach it. Its surface does not reflect you because it is opaque like

milky opal. Within the mirror someone is sealed away from your vision. Breath upon the surface; see your breath as a flow of rainbow sparks of light. This is life-giving breath. Slowly see the frosted surface melt away under your breath. The figure of someone comes clear in the mirror. It may be male or female, old or young, but it is never an animal or non-human entity, nor is it someone known to you in life. If the figure is still indistinct, concentrate upon your breath and the rainbow sparks of light. You are not giving life to your guardian so much as giving life to yourself. Your guide has always waited at this door to greet you and now you create the opportunity of your own volition. The surface of the mirror is now clear as day; the frame is as a doorway.

Greet your guardian and ask his or her name. In all your dealings with the guardian you must always speak first: your guardian will not speak to you unless you first make contact. This is important to remember so that you will not become dependent on or deluded by the appearances of the psychic world. If you cannot catch the guardian's name, establish a mutual recognition sign which you can exchange on future meetings — a small hand gesture will do. This will immediately establish the being as your own guide and not some stray contact in future meditation.

Now that the door is open between the worlds, you can meet and talk to your companion-guardian whenever you want. You may wish to do this privately in your room by speaking aloud, or by conversing on paper. Otherwise contact can be established by visualization and inner listening. Find your own level and be patient. As with all relationships, friendship and understanding will grow together in time.

Your guardian can be a sounding board, adviser and guide, not just of help in the Otherworld but in Middle Earth also. Good rapport with the daimon or muse is still considered valuable among creative people whose livelihood depends on inspiration, technique and concentrated effort: the friendship of the guardian enables them to fulfil their destinies by interpreting Otherworld concepts into crafts, arts, performances and music. One does not have to be a creative artist in order to live creatively at every level.

If you have a tendency to follow wonders or be dependent upon stronger personalities in your everyday life, beware. Do not act on everything your guardian tells you but reflect whether this advice is right for you at this time. Test the guardian's advice against your highest principles, submitting it, if necessary, to the source of your

spiritual focus. Don't totally surrender yourself to the guardian, but try to be responsible for your own actions and thoughts. Don't worship your guardian like a god; he or she can be seen as an older brother or sister, a companion with a little more experience than yourself.

This contact is intimately personal and can take many forms. We can only broadly hint at the variety of relationship to be had, but it will be found that further contacts will come as a result of practising it. Both inner and outer life are enriched and fructified by contact with the inner guardian. Flexibility of personality results together with a new self-awareness which will promote confidence and humility in good measure.

EXERCISE 8 THE TWO TREES MEDITATION

This meditation is not just another guided imagery game but an initiatory entry to the Otherworld, the inner world whose reality runs parallel to our world, but which can be entered at any time because it is timeless. This ritual entry has been orally transmitted from teacher to pupil over many generations in the native tradition of Britain: it has been guarded as a hidden treasure and never before been written down. Because of its importance and because the Native Tradition is coming into the forefront of consciousness once again, the authors have felt that the time has come to give it out. Within it you will meet certain images and characters; they will teach you and show you certain aspects of yourself. Those who don't work at it will get nothing from it: as an initiatory method it is safeguarded. Those who work with it and benefit from its practice are the ones for whom it is intended: for in the work of oral transmission, the living spark of the teaching must seed in the heart of the hearer.

Like an unfinished story, this meditation stands as a challenge to all who have felt the vital impulse of the inner levels in their blood. There is no end to this inner exploration, no correct way, no right order of events: each finds the journey tailored to his or her needs. The landscapes, the events and characters appear different according to the individual's perceptions, yet common images recur in assorted experiences which the authors have collated. This is not an easy journey to take because you go alone here. As this oral device was intended for use within a teacher-pupil relationship, with at least a

minimal amount of supervision, certain things should be borne in mind: if you can get no further than the beginning or you get stuck or encounter recurrent images, stop. The time is not right for you either to start or continue your inner charting. It may arise later. Some may find that they do not do the meditation – it does them. This can be disconcerting, but manageable if you keep a sensible balance in your life. If it is not possible to retire for the kind of retreat outlined on p. 154, to complete the journey, then strenuously block any images which try to intrude on your daily life, following the guidelines set down in the basic instructions to the exercises on p. 16. This exercise, like much in esoteric exploration, can become obsessive but you will find that once the initial 'blockbuster' effect has manifested, the meditation continues at a more even rate.

In many ways, the Two Trees meditation is a compendium of the other exercises in this book. Some seekers have emerged from this experience alternately shattered and enlightened. Its effect is deep, so do not approach it facetiously. Those you meet beyond the two trees take many forms: recognizable religious leaders, animals, interior companions and guides, as well as what appear to be misleading characters who set obstacles in your road. These should be firmly faced and challenged if they threaten your integrity. However, they can have a salutary effect on those who have been avoiding personal issues and who seek to hold on to cherished and mistaken precepts.

Over a period of time the images and teachings will integrate themselves into your lives, becoming part of your 'interior furnishing'. It is good to keep a written record of your journeying for future reference. When attempting to compare notes with a friend or group who are working this meditation, remember that results will be variable and that no qualitative judgments can be made on one's progress here. Even the teacher is not in a position to judge or comment, except to help and advise in the event of difficulty. The authors are willing to help in this regard if such difficulties are met with: any communications should be addressed to us c/o Routledge & Kegan Paul.

The Two Trees

You are standing at the top of a low hill. Below you is a shallow valley at the centre of which lies a lake. Beside it are two trees – silver birches – which are reflected upside-down in the water. Walk down from the hill and around the margin of the lake until you pass

between the two trees. As you do so focus your attention on the sky well above the horizon. There you will see either the sun or the moon: is it day or night? When you have established which, lower your gaze and see a figure approaching. It may be male or female, veiled or unveiled. This is your guide. Follow the instructions he or she gives to you. Your guide may accompany you or appoint a companion, or you may be sent on alone. Remember that no actual harm can come to you. Follow the way laid down for you and seek the goal to which you will be led.

You may return from your journey at any point that you choose. You will probably find that you slip in and out of the landscape of the journey at unexpected moments, and that after a lapse of several weeks or months you may find yourself taking up the journey again. Sometimes it may seem to continue even though you are not conscious of it, so that you may re-enter the landscape at a different point but in full awareness of what has passed, like remembering a dream. It should be understood that this inner journey may take years, possibly a lifetime and that, once begun, it will continue to reappear in your life. You need not start the journey from the beginning each time but simply follow its course.



CHAPTER 5

The Secret Commonwealth

For you took what's before me and what's behind me;
You took east and west when you wouldn't mind me,
Sun and moon from my sky you've taken,
And God as well, or I'm much mistaken.

'Donal Og', traditional Irish folk song

There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays,
And – every – single – one – of – them – is – right!

Rudyard Kipling: 'In the Neolithic Age'

NATIVE WISDOM

The Foretime is no more. While that historical era is over, its native wisdom survives, intact within the Otherworld, but fragmentedly within folk tradition and esoteric revival. Revival presents its own problems, often representing the values of the Foretime in the rosy glow of a Golden Age rather than in the light of the Secret Commonwealth which it represents. Robert Kirk (130, and see chapter 4) used this title to describe the land and manner of living of the Faerykind. The wisdom of the Native Tradition, from the Foretime up until the present, is literally our common-wealth, the treasury upon which we can draw for spiritual nourishment. Into its storehouses go every aspect of tradition, both pagan and Christian, old and new: its coinage is freshly minted anew every time one aspect of it is validly exchanged in Middle Earth. Only when the treasury is viewed as some kind of museum do its coins turn to leaves, like faery-gold. Revivalists who seek to employ traditions 'authentically' have to gang warily if those traditions are not to petrify under their touch.

Tradition is never static, endlessly reproducing itself to the last detail; it must change, adapting itself in different circumstances.

The transmission of the native wisdom is a miracle, although the symbiosis of its values is often overlooked by revivalists who either carefully invent 'ancient' tradition or who overstate fragments of it, constellating their meagre method around its dimly flickering beacon. We have shown how the traditions of the Foretime have returned: how the god-forms re-emerge, how the earth's energies have been recontacted and how the Otherworld is the key to native wisdom. Tracing the course of the Old Religion is less easy. Its path has been cross-tracked and overlaid with confusion; without the confirmative resonance of the Otherworld, theories of transmission choke each other like weeds. Any consideration of traditional transmission must be necessarily short, so within this chapter, we will attempt to show how this has been effected by the tribal unit as represented by shaman, ruler and people.

The modern pagan revival movement, known within its own circles as *the Craft*, is interesting in that it claims descent from the Old Religion of the Foretime. It disclaims any correspondence with what is popularly known as witchcraft, which is seen to derive from evidence extracted under torture in medieval and Jacobean times, and from the excesses of public imagination. Revivalist witches who proclaim their uninterrupted lineage from the Foretime are often embarrassed to explain how their tradition has survived untainted by accusations of cursing, child-sacrifice, orgies and devil-worship. If there seems to be an unexplainable hiatus between the Foretime's Old Religion and the modern Craft, it is because the links are either invisible or plainly were never there. Yet if there is any successor to the shaman then the most likely candidate is the revivalist witch.

While the legend of 'old families' keeping alive a dying tradition has been much embroidered by those commentators seeking rationalization for their claims, there were and still survive certain families where the Old Religion was transmitted in some form. One famous East Anglian witch, George Pickingill (1816–1909), who was consulted by Masons and Rosicrucians from Europe and America, traced his descent from Julia of Brandon, a witch who died in 1071 (271). His hereditary tradition descends through the nine covens which he founded over the course of sixty years, and so may be said to be operative today. Instances of hereditary succession are too fragmentary for any case to be made, however. Just how did the native shaman become a witch?

As druid succeeded shaman, so priest succeeded druid. Spiritual leadership is always exercised by the mystically percipient who are

drawn towards the priestly role; yet the priesthood became increasingly involved in ecclesiastical administration and theological intellectualism. Thus, the spiritual needs of those enmeshed in tribal consciousness were neglected. Despite the intermittent sniping of the Church, paganism and Christianity rubbed along: priest, people and ruler often exercising their dual membership of old and new religions in much the same manner as modern Japanese still avouch themselves both Shinto *and* Buddhist. By this time the shaman had either become a priest of the new religion or continued to function in the old one, albeit secretly.

At the Renaissance a new wind began to blow. The Reformation of the Protestant churches was an attempt to restate the Native Tradition in Christian as well as national terms. It is at this point that the major persecutions of Old Religionists, now called witches, began. Medieval Catholicism had strong links with the Native Tradition. Pope Gregory the Great had encouraged the siting of churches on pagan centres of worship and the continuation of pagan festivals in Christian guise. The Mother and Father of the Foretime, the Lord and Lady of the Old Religion whose aspects and avatars were the gods and goddesses of paganism, were present in the forms of Our Lord and Our Lady – Jesus and Mary. Under Protestantism and its offspring, Puritanism, the reverence to the Virgin was banned and the celebration of native festivals outlawed. Those whose dual allegiance was unthinking found themselves forced to take sides. The Protestant restatement of the Native Tradition did not include pagan revival; it sought to purge the native character of the pollution of both pagan and Catholic influence.

The Old Religion as a Foretime survival was forced into extinction: but before it died it showed its ugly side. Revivalists like to think of the 'burning times', as they are known in Craft circles, as a parallel to the persecution of the early Christians: small, fervent bands of dedicated pagans striving to keep the old ways alive, meeting secretly at night for fear of spies, and virtuously going about their daily business, ill-wishing no one. The reality was often far more human. To have one's spirituality derided, to lose one's livelihood, to see one's family suffer did not inspire feelings of goodwill: those with the power to heal and hurt often chose to hurt in vengeance and retribution. There were few on either side of the fence, whether Christian or pagan, who maintained the highest principles of their faith in practice. The notion of the Devil as God's opponent had been propounded from pulpits both Catholic and

Protestant. Under threat of persecution by their oppressor, some did turn for active support from the Devil: if God allied himself to the persecutors, let them join the opponent of God.

The basic compatibility of pagan and Christian was overturned in a hysterical purge. Christianity, shamed by its pagan beginnings and its urges from the tribal consciousness, eradicated offending members. Yet the fascination with the earlier levels of religion remained voyeuristically embedded within the hearts of Christian persecutors. It has been observed, that, at this time, 'treatises on witchcraft came near to being a pornographic genre' (278). The spectacle of two sets of shamans fighting each other is not a pleasant one. The tragedy of two religions turning sour might have been avoided, but the age was not noted for its tolerance. Yet all was not dark.

In his introduction to Carlo Ginzburg's *The Night Battles*, a study of pagan survival within the context of agrarian cults, E.J. Hobsbawm remarks of this sixteenth century Italian phenomenon:

here we have not Margaret Murray's subterranean old religion hostile to Christianity but ritual practices which had long established a symbiosis with the dominant religion – the *benandanti* (literally, 'those who go well') originally regarded themselves as champions of Christ against the devil – but which are forced into opposition . . . by Church policy (87).

These *benandanti*, ordinary country folk, went forth at night to do battle with those who threatened the crops. Doubtless some families retained this ancient guardianship, while isolated individuals with quicker wits than those of their contemporaries bore witness to the old ways. But the impetus of the Old Religion was broken and its shamans dead. There survived certain wise-women and cunning-men, like George Pickingill, at the tribal level of belief, whose role was nearest to the shamanic one; apart from them, the story-tellers, poets, musicians and craftspeople retained the ancient themes and skills, although usually in ways superficially unrelated to that of religion.

But just as ancient sites were discovered by gentlemen archeologists and the old mythologies aired by bored divines, so the Old Religion was investigated. We owe a debt of gratitude to the commentators, collectors and amanuenses who recorded what would otherwise have been lost; as Pausanias recorded ancient Greek customs and religious sites before the coming of Christianity

(192), so did Stukely and Aubrey record the British landscape before industrialization (251, 11). Cecil Sharp and Sabine Baring-Gould (193) collected folk songs, stories and dances before radio and television came to replace them. But we should ever be aware that a visit from the anthropologist is often a visit from the undertaker as traditional customs become self-aware.

A number of theories about the survival of the Old Religion as witchcraft began to fertilize and stimulate the native consciousness from the beginning of this century onwards. Charles G. Leland, an American folklorist and himself a descendant of John Leland the Royal Antiquary in 1553, uncovered evidence about Italian witchcraft and published his findings in *Aradia: the Gospel of the Witches* (137). The anthropologist, Margaret Murray, wrote two books: *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (1921) and *The God of the Witches* (1933). While Leland's findings were an isolated instance of survival from a first-hand informant – a witch called Maddalena – and only concerned with Italian practices, Murray's books attempted to take witchcraft seriously as a survival of the Old Religion. There were no witches to come forward and gainsay their findings. Persecution had resulted in an understandably deep-dyed secrecy, and the laws against witchcraft were still on the statute books in England. It was not until 1951 when the Witchcraft Act of 1736, under which those 'pretending to be witches' were liable to imprisonment, was repealed that other kinds of evidence began to turn up (270). The spearhead of the new evidence was Gerald B. Gardner, an amateur archeologist and anthropologist who had formed links with a coven in the New Forest in Southern England; he was subsequently initiated into the group and, after the repeal of the Witchcraft Act, he began to publish books about the Old Religion from within. *Witchcraft Today* and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* exploded the old misconceptions surrounding witches and propounded a cult of shaman-like practitioners of the Old Religion who kept the old festivals, worshipped the old gods and who worked only beneficent magic.

Gardner's claims have perturbed both those inside and outside neo-paganism. Doreen Valiente, who knew and worked with him, has this to say: 'the rituals he had received were in fact fragmentary . . . and to link them together into a coherent whole . . . he had supplied words which seemed to him . . . to strike the right chords in one's mind' (270). It would indeed be astonishing if anything like a coherent text had survived through oral transmission of old rituals. The Old Religion, never a codified whole even in the Foretime, was

fragmented and obscured. The tradition which Gardner contacted in the New Forest was different from those pagan survivals in other parts of the British Isles or in Europe. Whatever the leaders of other covens might say, Gardner's ideas sparked the dry tinder of a seemingly dead tradition into a great conflagration. Individuals who had fallen out of orthodox religion were attracted to join Gardner's covens and soon a great mushrooming of neo-paganism occurred. The Craft of the Wise, so called from the etymology which derives 'witchcraft' from the Saxon word 'wicce' or wise, grew at a phenomenal rate. Growing covens soon exceeded their autonomous units of thirteen, and sent off daughter covens. The Craft soon crossed the Atlantic where the boom was even bigger.

Gardner was not alone in his attempt to spread the Old Religion; other individuals, some with inflated egos, were soon claiming witch grandmothers and special powers. Neo-paganism had become cultist. Margot Adler discusses this phenomenon in the United States in her book *Drawing Down the Moon*. All the ingredients of the Foretime's Old Religion are present within the Craft: the worship of the old gods, celebration of agrarian and calendrical festivals, the joint priesthood of men and women, but why was this revival necessary?

The popular response to neo-paganism has been overwhelmingly large even in an age which turns to new religious cults to fill the gaps of orthodox faiths. It is likely that the push towards a reintegration of the Native Tradition is being experienced. In the thirty years since Gardner began his revival in all good faith, a significant pattern is emerging. While there are still those adherents who play at witches with a pathetically unadult enthusiasm, with plastic flowers in their hair, their middle-aged spreads ashake and their feet planted firmly in a never-never land of pagan peace, there are others who are remembering the old ways by analeptic means and who are practising them seriously as modern-day shamans. They may be unashamedly revival, yet their effect is directly influencing the New Age to appreciate some native wisdom.

Whilst revival Craft will always attract the childish adult, the fervent (usually male) servant of the Goddess and the power-seeking High Priestess, as well as the sexually immature and the religiously undecided, it is a force to be reckoned with when it is truly in touch with its native potency. Yet here also lies the danger of revival. What was common custom in the Foretime – blood-sacrifice, ritual mating, etc. – does not obtain today. And while the Craft as a whole

does not subscribe to these practices, those for whom these memories ring strong can be easily seduced from their spiritual evolution into inappropriate atavism. The esoteric dictum of evil being misplaced energy holds good here. What is correct in the Foretime is not correct now. Contact with unregenerate forces demands great personal integrity. Those who have a taste for the nasty or the naughty do not need to join the Craft to get their kicks, but those who 'bring their evil with them' do it no good service. If the Native Wisdom is contacted via the Otherworld, then the dangers are minimal, yet the question still needs to be answered, 'does this revival tradition work now in the twentieth century?' If the answer is no, then it is a form of play-acting, not a road to spiritual development.

What has been written here about the Craft applies equally to other neo-pagan groups. In so far as they are genuine attempts to contact the Native Tradition and bring it forward into the New Age, they are doing the work of the aeon. In so far as they are living in an ideal past, they are a waste of effort. These hard words apply to anyone who is walking back down the inner spiral of the Western Way for holidays in the past with no intention of returning. If the Craft seems to lack the integrity of, say, the Christian church, where are the modern mystical interpreters of the Christian tradition? Although neo-paganism works from the grass-roots up, at least it is sending out some scouts to explore the possibilities of its own tradition.

But while 'modern neo-mystics . . . have been drawn by . . . a rebirth of interest in mythology and especially British mythology; by the ill-defined belief in a New Age . . . by a rejection of Christianity which is not the old atheism or humanism, but a search for an alternative spirituality, often with magical and occultish aspects' (7), they cannot altogether ignore the mystical cohesion of Christianity which has preserved aspects of the Native Wisdom quite as successfully as the Craft has done, as well as imparting its own wisdom as a spiritual path. Geoffrey Ashe has written that 'The Strong Magic is creative as well as demoralizing' (7). If the 'strong magic' is able to operate instead as 'miracle', then the old and new religions need never be a stumbling-block to each other as they have been in the past. The renewal of the Secret Commonwealth happens by many means and its mediators may not necessarily be those occupying the shamanic or priestly role any longer. Ultimately it does not matter who mediates this renewal, as long as factionism can be avoided. The past is 'neither pagan nor Christian, it belongs to no nation and no class, it is universal' (202).

THE SECRET PEOPLE

They have given us into the hand of the new unhappy lords,
Lords without anger and honour, who dare not carry their swords.
They fight by shuffling paper; they have bright dead alien eyes;
They look at our labour and laughter as a tired man looks at flies.
And the load of their loveless pity is worse than the ancient wrongs,
Their doors are shut in the evening; and they know no songs (52).

That quotation from G.K. Chesterton's poem 'The Secret People' might well stand with that of the Irish folk song 'Donal Og' which heads this chapter as an indictment of the people of the Native Tradition, wherever they may be. Those who have followed us this far will perhaps have glimpsed the reasons why we think the Native Tradition is as important as the Hermetic in the formation of the Western Way. Those secure in their religious fastnesses, who have fixed and reassuring views on all aspects of life, can afford to be smug about the secret people from whom sun and moon, East and West, and any approachable concept of God have been riven.

To speak of the secret people in this regard is not to be patronizing about the 'lower-class' or peasant stock, because each of us is one of the secret people exiled from our tribe. The Western Way's Native Tradition has never gone in for autocratic priestly leadership: the spiritual well-being of the tribe has been exercised collectively by priest, people and ruler – the priest/shaman being the expert in spiritual matters. We have seen how the shaman survived as either priest or witch, just as the shamanka had the dual option of nun or wise-woman. The tribal rulers survived as feudal barons or else perished in the internecine squabbles for tribal leadership. 'Families of priests and noblemen, blessed with family trees as old as the Creation, were obliterated' (202) with such vigour that one is tempted to consider Margaret Murray's theory concerning the sacrificial divine victim which was demanded every seven years for the good of the land (176). Theories of Divine Kingship were upheld most strongly by the Stuart Kings – notably insisted upon by that same James I who had written a denouncement of witchcraft, the *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh 1597). After the demise of the Stuart cause and the institution of constitutional monarchy, the sense of tribal leadership was diminished. The cohesion of the tribe was broken and the secret people were leaderless or in the hands of those who cared only for their physical well-being – those 'new unhappy

lords' who were so out of touch with the urgency of the Native Tradition that 'they knew no songs'.

The secret people may have been like lost sheep, yet they were not fools. They knew that the high-sounding names of God, the alien rituals and political theorizing were not for them – that there was a homelier and easier way than this. Yet, equally, they often let themselves be duped by a lazy dependence on tribal consciousness and were manipulated to fight in foreign wars, to go hungry and landless – anything save find the salvific story, the essential spiritual destiny which was rightfully theirs. Rather than seek for the Secret Commonwealth they sank back into the fleshpots and superstitions of exoteric religion, clinging fondly to the worn-down and vitiated customs of their ancestors.

After the Foretime had receded to a faint memory and under successive invaders, the secret people continued, adapting themselves as minimally as possible to the new ways. Yet there rose from within their ranks certain individuals – not esotericists or those whose names spring to mind with regard to the Hermetic tradition – but continuators, connection-men and women, marginal shamans whose names we shall never know. These hidden shepherds acted as seed-bearers on the marginal thresholds of experience: they had no part in political exhortation, nor did they employ their charisma to become popular figure-heads. They were the poets, story-tellers, folk-singers, visionaries, craftspeople and synthesizers of the inner vision whose hidden duty was to transmute the Native wisdom into something more immediately usable. If we mention the names of a handful of these continuators but briefly, it is not in disrespect of their wisdom and insight.

The Native mystics are represented by Mother Julian of Norwich (c.1342–1420) whose insight into the nature of Deity was expressed in both masculine and feminine imagery, and whose concern was for her 'even-Christians' and the immediacy of love's action within humanity (122). While across the Atlantic, the non-conformist vision of Mother Ann Lee (1736–84) founded the Shakers who employed an ecstatic tradition of dance and song as a means of worship (286).

The Native visionary poets William Blake (1757–1827) and George Russell, or 'A.E.' (1867–1935) are both in the tradition of Kirk's Master-Men, walkers-between-the-worlds whose visitations were recorded in their poetry and other writings (22, 218). While the Native nature mystics and poets, Coleridge, Wordsworth and

Shelley, are better known; Walt Whitman (1819–92) and Richard Jefferies (1848–87) both explored the pantheistic response with cosmic insight (284, 118).

As embodiments of a dead culture we have the testimonies of Black Elk (1863–?) who spoke of the Lakota Indians of his tribe and their demise under white culture (180), and Peig Sayers (1873–1958), an illiterate Irishwoman who had no English, yet who was a fund of traditional stories (180).

We spoke earlier about the skill of poet and bard: the degeneration and revival of the native poetic tradition is amply dealt with in Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*. Long after the great Celtic poets had sunk to the level of horny-handed itinerants plying their songs and stories through an impoverished land, the ancient traditional tales and ritual scenarios were remembered and sung by nameless folk-singers on both sides of the Atlantic (175, 193).

The shamanic skills of healing fell to the village witch whose practice of folk-medicine is now being revived in a world impatient of orthodox healing methods. Stripped of the old healing chants, techniques of balancing the subtle psychic body and its energy fields are dismissed as witch-doctoring – they are, but still effective for all that.

The crafts-tradition of creating an object and fixing it in Middle Earth by means of wood, clay and iron is a paradigm of the esotericist's art. Eric Gill (1882–1940), the sculptor, reminds us that 'art' originally meant 'skill' and that the artist 'is the person who actually has the skill to make things . . . to bring into physical existence the things which abide in the mind' (86). Through the craftsperson many religious and mystical truths are transmitted from one generation to the next, without need for concealment, because they are 'self-evident truths' and open mysteries. The analogy of craft-work has been absorbed by both the Craft, as a neo-pagan movement, as well as by Freemasonry, as a Hermetic revival. The strength of the crafts-guilds enabled the traditions to be transmitted in a unified way which was appreciable to all at many levels. Yet more often the continuators were inspired individuals who were the leaven in each generation, engaged in the cyclic action of restating and rediscovering the truth of the Native Tradition. Their very namelessness is unimportant – we have mentioned only a scattering of these marginal shamans whose work has informed our own century – for it is said:

Every cycle has its prophets – as guiding stars; and they are the burning candles of the Lord to light the spiritual temple on earth, for the time being. When they have done their work, they will pass away; but the candlesticks will remain, and other lights will be placed in them (286).

THE MOTHER-COUNTRY

Yet in some eras the light burned less brightly when the continuators were less skilled or their influence absent. Although the secret people never ceased to be psychically sensitive, without training or some kind of shamanic supervision their efforts often failed to result in anything more than a low-level psychism which runs after signs and portents rather than concerning itself with the spiritual well-being of the world. The Otherworld communicated its messages still, yet these were cast into the immediate language and symbolism of everyday life. There was no shortage of communication between the worlds, just a shortage of experienced decoders. The prevailing popular interest in what might be called 'low-level' occultism – a surface fascination with astrology and divination – might lead one to speculate whether indeed occultism was not the pornography of religion. Yet, as H.P. Blavatsky has commented:

occultism is not magic, though magic is one of its tools. Occultism is not the acquirement of powers, whether psychic or intellectual, though both are its servants. Neither is occultism the pursuit of happiness, as men understand the word; for the first step is sacrifice, the second, renunciation (24).

We shall be discussing the split between religion and magic in volume 2, yet 'tampering with the occult' is regarded as dangerous by the conventionally religious who quite happily digest miracles, propitiatory prayer to the saints, the existence of guardian angels and the sanctity of church precincts. It is worth juxtaposing this list with the beliefs current among esotericists of many kinds: the use of magic, mediation of god-energies, the protection of the circle-guardians, and the sanctity of ancient temples both of stone and earth. Spiritual bigotry results from fear of the unknown and the threat to one's own comfortable ride to heaven. However, spiritual progress is full of such challenges and threats – without them there is no progress.

Yet the negative examples of occultism are always being stressed by those who seldom or never examine the short-comings of their own tradition. Two pictures emerge. The Native Tradition is exemplified by the Witch, stirring her cauldron, cursing all and sundry: a woman of evil intent whose sexuality is of a disturbing kind, unless she is portrayed as an ugly hag. Significantly, she is a *woman*. The Hermetic Tradition fares no better, being portrayed by the Black Magician, safe within his circle, wrapped in his emblematic cloak and hat, invoking demons and commanding elemental power: significantly again, he is a *man* of malicious intent whose devious brain threatens the well-being of the world. These fearsome projections are frequently trotted out of the esoteric cupboard by those who are ignorant of the complementary opposites of these pictures. While it would be a gross simplification to identify the Native Tradition with the feminine, and the Hermetic with the masculine, there is a symbolic truth to be uncovered here. The witch is more often the wise-woman or sibyl, personifying the integrated wisdom of the earth, mediating natural magic and prophetic insight; just as the black magician is more often the alchemist who transmutes the perennial wisdom into a way of spiritual evolution. This identification cannot be pressed too far since it fails to take in the subtler level at which gender ceases to have any importance. Yet the fact that the negative images of the Western Way constellate around the feminine and masculine in this manner should remind us of the fact that the older 'feminine' mysteries of the Native Tradition have suffered from neglect just as the 'masculine-oriented' mysteries of the Hermetic Tradition have been over-stated and become rigid.

We spoke in the introduction of the fact that we are aware of our patrilineal heritage – our exoteric side – but that we have neglected our matrilineal side – the esoteric side of ourselves. The Native Tradition is very much the mother-tradition in which we are born and to which we fail to succeed. The secret matronym of our mother-country has been withheld from us and to discover it we must go on a long journey of self-discovery.

How each of us interrelate with our secret mother-country, our esoteric selves, is a measured reflection of how we respond to the Mother herself – the Goddess, whose re-evaluation within the twentieth century is an attempt to trace the first inward spiral of our spiritual journey. The re-evaluation of early modes of worship has produced at one and the same time some of the most profound and the silliest concepts in popular consciousness. The primal under-

standings of the Foretime were uncomplicated compared with those facing any revival of Goddess worship today. The same problems of reversion to primitive modes of behaviour apply again, as a variety of groups are spawned, all concerned with re-establishing the Golden Age of Matriarchy when the Mother ruled and women were treated right. The Craft has had its feminist variants in the shape of Dianic Craft – covens for women only (1). The radical wedge of feminism has split old understandings of sexuality, gender and their application to the archetypes of Deity with greater or lesser skill (63, 244).

Within the field of esotericism and spirituality – and indeed throughout this book – there can be no differentiation of intent between the men and women who walk the inner path. On the inner levels there are no such political problems as those now facing us on the outer levels of life. Certainly, work on the inner levels is experienced differently by men and women as Dion Fortune implies in her enlightening essay, 'The Worship of Isis' (78):

Isis is the All-woman, and all women are Isis. Osiris is the All-man, and all males are Osiris. Isis is all that is negative, receptive, and latent. Osiris is all that is dynamic and potent. That which is latent in the outer is potent in the inner; and that which is potent in the outer is latent in the inner. . . . This is the law of alternating polarity, which is known to the wise.

Women are potent upon the inner levels, acting as sibyls, seers, bringers of spiritual fertility – yet artists of both sexes operate upon this principle also. Men are potent on the outer levels, acting as directors and synthesizers, reflecting inner inspiration and earthing it – yet researchers of both sexes also actualize inner confirmations of their theories in this manner. There are no hard and fast rules, yet this circuit of polarity is a fact of inner working. While we can say, generally speaking, that women tend inwards on the spiral path and men tend outwards, once the principle of polarity is understood these directions can be accommodated in reverse: thus women can operate as directors of inner work, while men may act as mediums for the inner levels.

Confusion is rife on the levels of meaning surrounding sexuality, polarity, and the gender assigned to Deity. Male and femaleness are the symbolic masks worn by Deity for our comfort and understanding. Although the female mask has not been exhibited in the West for many centuries, it remains a valid working form for those who are willing and able to mediate the energies of the Mother. Although

there were women-only and men-only cults – those of Bona Dea (13) and Mithras (274), for example – and while there will always be male and female-oriented mysteries, the present concern is not with exclusivism. The archetypes of God and Goddess are common and powerfully effective energies, flowing from the Spiritual Realms, which are for all people – not limited in application to man or woman only. We should beware of projecting our repressions and longings upon the divine archetypes, nor should we confine their operation within the limits of historicity.

Sexuality merely determines our gender function as human beings who have the potential to physically reproduce themselves. It is frequently misapplied and confused with *polarity*. The sexual circuit is made between a man and a woman. The polarity circuit is made between outer and inner levels – or between the Otherworld and Middle Earth. When ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ circuits are crossed, the result is confusion of intent, and its effect can be traced throughout the history of the esoteric world where sordid little episodes cloud the clarity of inner working. If there ever was a form of Western Tantra, its principles have been mainly lost sight of.

These definitions need to be borne in mind when discussing those hackneyed designations: patriarchal and matriarchal religion. Where feminism has successfully campaigned for women’s elevation from subservient or slave status to the level of a human being who has equal rights, it has done the work of education. If its occasional stridency grates upon the ear, it should be considered that sexual equality is far from established in many areas of the world, both West and East. Where feminism has claimed exclusive rights over spiritual areas it is as guilty of spiritual appropriation as the so-called patriarchal religions.

Yet there should be no cause for concern: women have held the guardianship of the mother-country, acting as the repositories of religion during the dark times. But it is important that their instinctive knowledge should be disseminated freely now and not held in stasis where it is liable to decay unused. If patriarchal trends have kept the wisdom of the mother-country of the Native Tradition in check, then the compassion of the Divine Feminine should be applied as an antidote not as a blindfold. The automatic rejection by women of anything masculine – whether it be symbolic or actual, god or man – is childish in the extreme.

Both sexes have a lot to teach each other. While each may retain their own mysteries, it is vital that skilful initiators, both male and

female, emerge soon before the Western Way is lost in a welter of misinformation about its own traditions both Native and Hermetic. The neo-pagan movement has opened the way for both sexes to re-experience the Mother in a practical sense. But perhaps more importantly, the essential symbolic verities of the Divine Feminine have been intelligently presented for the first time in this century – mostly by female psychologists. The work of Esther Harding (102), Sylvia Perera (196) and Helen Luke (145) has gone a long way to educate the twentieth century consciousness. Before the century is out the response to discussion about the Goddess will not be ‘which goddess?’ – a question unthinkable if applied to God – but an acceptance and understanding unparelled since the Foretime when the earth herself was first called mother.

REDEEMING THE TIME

A great renaissance of neo-paganism and shamanistic techniques is abroad. Modern consciousness has latched onto something old and primeval. For many it is an escape from the present; for others it is a welcome alternative to the watered-down versions of orthodox religious practice remembered from their youth. This neo-pagan upsurge has brought with it an understanding of our belonging to the earth, a discovery of the Mother-country and of the native wisdom of the Secret Commonwealth; but it has another dangerous side – one which would apply ancient principles to modern consciousness with no regard to the passing of time and circumstance. Thus those who walk the Western Way through its Native Tradition should bear in mind that:

the mind of the student must be clearly focused in objective consciousness. *Development on top of an atavism* is the cause of most of the difficulties that occur in [esoteric] training (236, italics ours).

As we have tried to point out throughout this book; the Native Tradition’s soil is fertile for present research and future growth, but it does need to be well-turned first. Those who seek to use its images and its ancient wisdom undiluted with common sense will come to grief.

The regeneration of old forms through modern consciousness is of prime importance. The coincidence of ancient resonances with

present understanding should alert us to the fact that the inward path of the maze has been threaded as far as it can go. The work of manifestation and return as inspired by the cosmic rhythm, belief and acceptance of reincarnation, the growing concern with the planet's survival are all currently symptoms of the Aquarian Age consciousness – or of its crankiness, depending on your standpoint. Certainly the paradigm-shift (74) whereby one set of concepts is exchanged for another, proven over periods which are not appreciable within the context of one lifetime, is occurring before our very eyes. The actual shift of ideas may seem chaotic from a subjective viewpoint; indeed, as old forms break down and are replaced by others, the transition seems disordered. It is safer to cling to the forms we know, easier to subsist within a framework which is predictable, but the imposition of a new set of values is really more like moving house – we decide what we will pack and what we discard. It is then a question of seeing where our old possessions, our ancient knowledge, will sit most harmoniously with the new within our house.

The image of movement, change and exile is implicit within the Western Way, often expressing itself in *actual* movement. The image and the actuality are superimposed on each other as the inward impulse to seek Otherworld realities are expressed by means of physical journeying. The Heavenly Jerusalem cannot be established in any place but the heart: to seek a location for it on earth and then people it with all-too-human people is to build the Profane Jerusalem. Yet the Western Way has grown up among peoples who sought for new lands during the great migrations of the Foretime. Those invaders who migrated West across Europe, those whom we call the Celts, reached the utmost West in the British Isles: they in their turn were invaded. Their brash entrance into these islands can be contrasted with their sad leaving of them. During the Irish potato famine and the Scottish Clearances during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, boat-loads of disconsolate people, their spirit broken and bereft of their adopted soil, mourned and lost heart when they sighted their new homeland on the Eastern seaboard of America:

Thig iad ugainn, carach, seolta,	They come to us, deceitful, cunning,
Gus ar mealladh far ar n-eolas;	In order to entice us from our
Molaidh iad dhuinn Manitoba,	homes;
Durthaich fhuar gun ghual, gun	They praise Manitoba to us,
mhoine.	A cold country without coal, with-
	out peat (231).

In time they made new lives, preserving their native tradition and weaving its threads into the new weave of America. Likewise, those who were transported to Australia were to form the nucleus of a new civilization in the Southern Hemisphere. Both sets of emigrants were partially responsible for the disruption of then existing native traditions in America and Australia. This is but one example of the pattern of migration and invasion underlying the development of the Western world. It is being currently re-enacted again in our own time as waves of migrant workers and refugees arrive in search of work or a new home. Those who object strongly to this movement conveniently forget the karmic debt of Western colonialism. Racial bigotry is the last bastion of the deeply-rooted tribal consciousness which strives to remain in its territorial past.

Side by side with racism is extremist nationalism which stresses ethnic cohesion at the cost of world-peace: sometimes engineered and orchestrated by political leaders who have the charismatic power of tribal leaders, the nationalism of the terrorist is the last attempt of the native folk-soul to establish itself unequivocally on its own terms. These dual errors can only be corrected and balanced by a study of world-citizenship and universal fellowship. The group-soul will not pass away, nor will distinctive national characters be erased: they can be regenerated by contact with other traditions and made to resonate more strongly by that contact than would have been possible otherwise. The inward spiral of the maze has been walked to its centre and only the threading out will release the true ancient wisdom of the Native Tradition.

The Native Tradition can be used as a tool for progress and integration: the Otherworld insights can help bring into manifestation the evolutionary impulse which will facilitate the process of regeneration. For, of the two methods of easing new ideas into consciousness – that of political persuasion, or that of inner realization – the latter means has the more immediate effect.

In his *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler posits that:

If the last 50,000 years of man's existence were to be divided into lifetimes of approximately 62 years each, there have been about 800 such lifetimes. Of these 800 fully 650 were spent in caves. Only during the last 70 lifetimes has it been possible to communicate effectively from one life to another – as writing made it possible to do. Only during the last six lifetimes did masses of men ever see a printed word (262).

The advent of education has opened up the whole world to our generation: 'The heritage of any race lies open to another; the best thought of the centuries is available for all; and ancient techniques and modern methods must meet and interchange' (14). While many have progressed to individual consciousness and seek to take the next step to cosmic consciousness, there are still those who exist in tribal consciousness despite access to education; yet mere book-learning is so much rubbish unless it can be applied to life. The progression from tribal to individual consciousness has been, for the most part, effected. People are now aware of themselves as individuals with rights but are as yet unwilling or unable to go further than this. This self-complacency is being challenged on a global scale.

As we approach the year 2000, many prophets of doom arise or are resurrected to prove that the world will end in 1999, as prophesied by Nostradamus; that nuclear war will wipe out humanity; or that the population explosion will exhaust the world's resources. A great deal of false gloom and despondency has overcome many as a result of these prognostications. Those for whom this lifetime is seen to be the only one fear deeply for themselves and their families, whereas those who believe in reincarnation wonder whether there will be another opportunity to incarnate again. These fears are only the latest formalization of a recurrent tendency to despair when faced with change (57).

Certainly we have any number of doomsday projections which explore the possibilities of apocalypse in detail. But [there is] revealed another possible scenario – that crisis may be an evolutionary catalyst in the push towards a higher level (221).

Is the millennial panic merely a fear of change? The Chinese word for crisis, 'wei-chi', means both 'beware, danger' and 'opportunity for change' (ibid.): which thought may stimulate new hopefulness for those who fear the end of things.

The forecasts of a New Dark Age, the Western resonance of the Hindu *Kali Yuga* – the last age wherein moral decline, lack of devotion and apocalyptic destruction takes place – can be seen as projections of the inner and outer turmoil now taking place (97). *These forecasts are not inevitabilities*, although neither should their message be ignored, but treated rather as salutary warnings. As when an inlet of water is injected into a pool of still water so that a complex of opposing spirals is created with ripples and opposing vortices, so

do we find ourselves in the present age – either retreating into the ancestral past or projecting into an unknown future. The turning of the age is upon us and we will need the tools of the Hermetic Tradition to help us thread out of the maze again and enable us to assess our present situation.

If the arc of the Native Tradition can be traced starting in the Foretime and extending to just beyond the Renaissance, so can the Hermetic Tradition be traced in an arc starting in the Classical period and leading to the present time. Of course, both traditions extend further in both space and effect than these approximate historical eras, contactable through the agency of the Otherworld. Both traditions are harmonics of each other, as well as being echoes of a larger cosmic scale. The Hermetic Tradition harmonizes around the basal chord of the Native Tradition.

We have already mentioned the reviving shamanic traditions of the American Indians and Australian Aborigines: the Western shamanic revival is looked on with less favour by those who fail to comprehend the underlying reasons for revival.

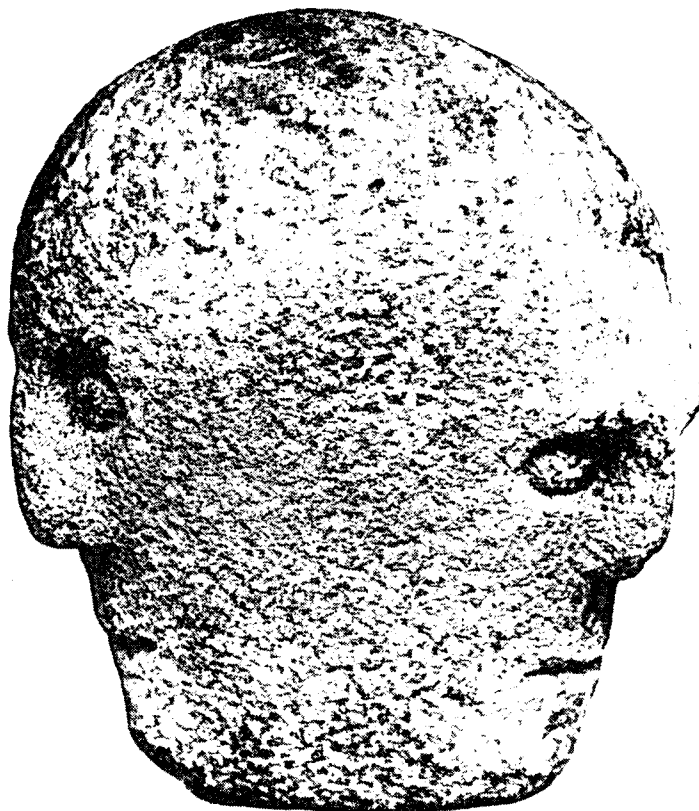
The revival of modern western magic and the renewed interest in 'native' cosmologies and shamanism as found among the Amer-Indian cultures, for example, show that a 'mythic backlash' has taken place. It has proved to be unsatisfactory, and indeed, possibly pathological, to attempt to repress the vestiges of mythological thought in modern man in the vain hope of eliminating 'superstition' with the advance of science. Clearly we humans require domains of mystery; we need to know where the sacred aspects of life may be found and how to understand the intuitive, infinite and profoundly meaningful visionary moments which arise in all of us at different times (69).

The present resonances with the Foretime's traditions are clearly being made available at this time for good reasons. Rather like the storm which in 1850 exposed the Stone Age village of Skara Brae in the Orkney Islands (133), complete and perfect as the day it was evacuated so many centuries previous, so are we being permitted a rare and unparalleled glimpse into our ancestors' inner life. There is a rising sensibility that our sophistication and civilization are perhaps gauche, that our computer technology is not the best preparation for the coming millenium, and that we have lost something both

precious and vitally useful for survival somewhere along the road to progress: that premonition haunts us.

Yet, as Dion Fortune writes in her *Avalon of the Heart*, these resonances of the Native Tradition are stepping stones on the path of the Western Way:

things come home to our hearts, and we feel the unbroken line of our national life stretching back into the remote past, and know that it will reach into the far future and that we ourselves are a part of it (79).



EXERCISES

EXERCISE 9 SELF-CLARIFICATION

Over the door to the temple of Apollo at Delphi was the inscription 'Gnothi seauton' – *know thyself*. This dictum has been at the heart of the mysteries of all nations and it is one which the follower of the Western Way would do well to take seriously. The work of the mysteries is to bring through light to dark places; each participant in this work stands in relation to that light as a lantern does to the sun, so that if the lantern is obscured the light cannot shine. But to 'know oneself' and clear these obscurities is no easy task: it is the work of a lifetime. Access to a format in which we may begin the work of self-clarification is even harder, especially for those outside an organized system of belief and practice. This exercise is an attempt to bridge that gap in a way which is adaptable according to personal circumstance.

It may be argued that so much self-pondering is unhealthy and that the best answer is a trip to the psychoanalyst. Yet self-clarification is not undertaken with any selfish motive. As any initiate of the mysteries knows, in order to be of service each has to be aware of both individual potentialities and limitations. There is also another danger if this work is avoided. There is a famous picture by the pre-Raphaelite painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, entitled *How They Met Themselves*. It depicts a medieval couple walking through a wood and encountering their doubles 'who glow supernaturally and appear to assert a stronger right to existence'. It was probably painted to illustrate the concept in Elizabeth Barrett's poem, 'Willowwood':

And I was made aware of a dumb throng
That stood aloof, one form by every tree.
All mournful forms, for each was I or she.
The shades of those our days that had no tongue (257)

It is a fair illustration of what may befall the traveller in the Otherworld if he or she has neglected the work of self-clarification: to meet oneself coming on the inner levels can be a considerable

shock, but one which is nullified if the unassimilated and forgotten aspects of the personality have already been recognized and accepted. Indeed such a meeting in the Otherworld would only occur in the case of someone who was attempting to run before they could walk.

The ability to master outer circumstance before attempting inner work is often a prerequisite of the mystery schools today, as imbalances quickly show up in magical work and render the operation useless. Indeed many people are in such a rush to get to the next life that they ignore this one entirely and launch themselves upon the astral only to end like Icarus. It is important to realize that this exercise is concerned only with your present incarnation, not with past lives. It may be that certain past-life problems will be resolved thereby, but it is not important to know anything about them. Everything that you need to know about yourself is near to hand.

By a closer look at ourselves, our motives, limitations and potentialities the clear thread of our destiny is revealed, allowing us to find our way through the self-made maze, like Theseus through the labyrinth. Some unwind their threads quicker than others. Some have tangled their thread so thoroughly that it will be some time before the turning point is reached. While we must be conformable to the pattern of our present incarnation, our fate is not fixed or predestined. To some extent we each make our own circumstances and while self-clarification may highlight and partially explain them, it does not justify them. Whatever responsibilities we have taken on cannot be off-loaded because we suddenly discover a 'spiritual' destiny. It may be that the path of the hearth-fire, which is parallel to the Hindu concept of the way of the householder, must be undertaken first.

Self-clarification requires that we ask ourselves certain questions: the ones listed below are merely guidelines and can easily be adapted or expanded according to your needs. Rather as the shaman goes aside to wrestle with him or herself, so must we. Some of the questions will be exceedingly painful to answer honestly, and because the mind avoids pain by sliding round it like water round a rock, it will be necessary to have a notebook and pen to hand to note down your realizations so that there is no escaping the issue. You need not show this to anyone; indeed, you can destroy it. The important thing is that you have thought about the painful areas without hiding from yourself.

In this way self-clarification becomes an initiation of fire.

Sit in meditation and visualize a door before you. Pass through it and go down the corridor beyond, at the end of which is another door. This opens into a library. No one else is here, only you. Although there are countless books on the shelves around you, there is only one which you seek. It is before you on a lectern. On the cover is inscribed *The Book of (your name)*. This is the book of your present life, from your birth up until today. Go through it as objectively as possible and see what is written there. Certain episodes will leap out at you, but keep turning the pages to acquire an overall impression of its shapes and patterns.

What experiences have you had? What did they teach you? How far have you created the circumstances which now govern your life? What relationships have you had with family, friends, colleagues and lovers? How have you behaved within them? In what degree have those you disliked been responsible for revealing aspects of yourself which were obscured? What has been the quality of your life in physical, emotional, mental and spiritual terms? What are your potentialities and talents? What are your limitations? How far have the former been employed usefully? How can your negative aspects be made positive? Are your present circumstances balanced? In what way could you exercise more self-discipline?

Examine your spiritual or inner life from birth to the present. What influences have you experienced? Have your inner promptings fallen into a discernable pattern? What religious affiliations have you had and what has been the quality of your commitment to them? If you have never subscribed to any religious or spiritual movement, where are your spiritual faculties committed? If you are aware of a destiny, in what way does it relate to your spiritual path? Are they the same thing?

You need not answer these all at once, but take a few each time and work through these or any other questions which may occur to you. As soon as you have realized an answer, or a lack of one, return the way you came and write down your findings.

This is very hard work and the first sessions may be emotionally exhausting ones. Once you have been through the book of your life to the present time, you need not keep immersing yourself in the past – unless a specific problem warrants it – but pay attention instead to your daily life. A lifetime's habits cannot be broken overnight, but the very fact of self-awareness will begin the work of letting through.

the light in your lantern. Controlling or transforming your limitations is less about cleaning than about composting. All life's experiences teach us something: nothing is wasted. Experiences, good and bad, are the compost which we spread on the soil of the soul. Even major problems can be turned into strengths in this manner, so that you co-operate with your tendencies rather than working against them.

This exercise is not all gloom and doom, however. Make a list of your aims and correlate them with your potential. We seldom use our potentialities to their fullest extent: by maximizing them and working with them we are doing the work of creation. Creative expression is not about *doing* all the time, but is informed by *being*—listening in to the pulse of creation by contemplative reflection.

The evening review is performed by many initiates of the mysteries and while it is not really an extension of self-clarification, it is related. This is an objective observation of the day's activities which is run through the mind backwards, like a film in reverse. You can do this in bed and, if you fall asleep before you arrive at the beginning of the day, it doesn't matter. The purpose of the evening review is to clear the consciousness of the day's activities, leaving it ready for the refreshment of sleep. Dreams will be correspondingly clearer of daily accumulations. No moral judgment is to be exercised. Just aim at a straight run through of events in reverse.

EXERCISE 10 THE RETREAT

A retreat is associated in many minds with a Christian retreat on which prayer, meditation and a special celebration of the sacraments are practised, interspersed with pious conferences given by a retreat leader, but there is no reason why anyone should not undertake their own retreat as a time away from the world, modifying it to their special needs. Most of us live so tightly packed together that the experience of being alone is seldom had; moments of introspection are rare and prolonged meditation upon our relationship to the Otherworld, the Spiritual Realms and Middle Earth is impossible. A retreat is not an escape from the problems of life but an important breathing space in which those problems may be clarified, a time in which our true potential can be realized. This 'holy hiatus' in the headlong course of life can have lasting effects: our ability to cope with life improves, the psyche is stilled and the deep impulses within

us are free to rise unfettered. Those who belong to no tradition will have had no experience of or opportunity for a retreat, yet the Native Tradition gives us examples in plenty: the sweat-lodge or *kiva* of the Red Indian, the vision quest of the shaman, the tribal descent to the ancestor's burial-place, are sealed-off *temenos* in which such a retreat was undertaken from the Foretime onwards. In later times the retreat of Abra Melin urges a six month preparation and withdrawal in order to contact the holy guardian angel; the cell of the medieval anchorite constituted a more permanent retreat, as did the cave of the hermit.

Obviously, considerations of time, location and cost enter into any preparation for retreat: the longer the retreat, the longer the preparations. No more than three days should be attempted at first or you will need a considerable back-up team to support your efforts: any longer is a strain on those unused to long periods of solitary survival. Where is the best place? Ideally an isolated spot which is a known sacred site, preferably a little-used one. (Well-known sites attract some intrepid hermits, however, according to one report recently of a single be-tented individual discovered on top of Silbury Hill, the small earthen mound in populous Wiltshire!) This is fine if you are an experienced camper and have your own transport: you can take off when you please. But, be warned, never go anywhere alone where you are likely to be in danger—mountains, mists, bogs, disused mine-workings or collapsing caves must be taken into consideration. If your retreat is likely to end in exposure, sickness, injury or the services of a mountain rescue team, you had better stay at home. If you decide on a spot then at least inform someone of your whereabouts so that you can be found in an emergency. Keep your equipment to a minimum, keep your body temperature from extremes of heat and cold and you have the beginning of an interesting retreat.

But what of those who aren't hardy enough for such exploits in the open air? Surprising though many might find this, both Christian and Buddhist retreat centres are very sympathetic to individuals who wish to have a quiet time away from the world: you need to pick a time when an organized retreat is not in progress and, so long as you observe the common code of courtesy and do nothing which is strictly contrary to the tenets of the centre, a good retreat can be had. Some centres have a hermitage-like hut which can be used by self-catering pilgrims. The advantages of a retreat-centre or monastery over any holiday hotel or camping village are apparent from the

quiet and holy atmosphere (although, unfortunately, many more people are discovering monastic holidays and some places may be as noisy as a seaside village), and the presence of experienced explorers of the spiritual realms whose attitude to guests is coloured by their perception that every guest is sent by God is an advantage. They are often willing to talk to genuine seekers of the spirit and will not press themselves upon you.

While it is better to get totally away from everyday life for a retreat, others cannot leave home so easily, either through commitment, age or handicap. The home retreat is perhaps the hardest: life's problems are all too present and the distracting stimuli of television, radio, books and tape-recorder are temptingly within reach. The home retreat is best accomplished in a day or, if you can manage the time, a long weekend. Telephones are perhaps the worst problem if you wish to be undisturbed.

So, you have decided on the place of your retreat and made your preparations: what will you do on this retreat? We are so well versed in filling our day with activity that the retreat can become a trap at first as we attempt to pack every minute with soul-searching meditation and strenuous inner exertion. The state of contemplation is not busy but very tranquil. The self-clarification exercise could be attempted as a beginning, to enable you to revise your aims, seeking to see how the retreat can be used as a springing-off point for them. But, most of all, you are attempting to get closely in touch with yourself. Get used to the feeling of being alone; sit and breathe quietly and evenly, letting all the tensions out of your body. Set aside mental distractions and nagging worries. This is your special time which you are entitled to: it is not selfish or time-wasteful.

If you are frightened of coming to the end of your resources, take a helpful and thought-provoking book which can help you spark off meditation points. Take a notebook and a couple of biros to record your thoughts and realizations in: this can be the start of a spiritual journal which can be kept up after the retreat is over. If you prefer, take some craft or hobby which occupies the hands, but let it be something which is manually absorbing only and not a time-passing distraction. Russian Orthodox monks make prayer-beads while they meditate, and Cistercians hoe vegetables, just as shamans tap their drums and shamankas work their spindles. All these actions are rhythmic, allowing the body its motion, but by-passing it so that the psychic faculties are free to engage in other matters. There is no reason why, if you are totally alone, you should be still and silent. If

you are camping, then you can sing or chant, walk or dance, weave ritual patterns through a maze traced on the earth, or make a small natural shrine out of stones or wood as a focus for your retreat. It is entirely up to you. You may wish to undergo the Otherworld Journey in the form of the Two Trees Meditation, or attempt other exercises outlined in this book. Make this time work for you.

Should you fast? Only if you have previously attempted a fast and know how your body is likely to react. Fasting is bad enough in a busy day at work but, when faced by acres of empty time, the body starts demanding more food at frequent intervals. By all means, reduce your intake so that the retreat doesn't become a cordon bleu holiday. Stick to simple foods: eggs, cheese, bread, soup, fruit and fresh vegetables, with spring water or fruit-juice to drink. Campers may need some hot food but the home-retreatant should not suffer from a simple uncooked diet. Retreat centres inevitably serve quite spartan fare.

If you are interrupted explain politely but firmly that you are a) conducting an experiment in survival technique, or b) on a silent retreat: if at home, you will have to use your ingenuity or arrange for someone to answer your phone for you. The help of a sympathetic partner or friend can be engaged to give you time and space, and provide the necessary support should you need it. While some friends may regard your actions as downright anti-social, you will find that others will be sufficiently intrigued to try a retreat for themselves. A group-retreat is feasible, but it needs organization, a good retreat leader and plenty of self-discipline. A group-retreat can give the necessary support for those who are uncertain of themselves in a solitary condition: the retreat-leader should be experienced and able to supply the right kind of impetus for self-motivating discovery.

It is not necessary to repeat the retreat very often — once a year, or once every five years for an organized, get-away-from-it-all one. At least once a quarter we need a small space of contemplation and that can be undertaken at home. The only equipment required is a blanket or long cloak with a hood which can be wound round you, shutting out all distractions. Like the shaman wrapped in his skin-hide, totally absorbed in the inner workings of his being, we can experience the communion of the Otherworld and keep in touch with ourselves. Those who go within and contact their inner resources are better able to make the outward journey in the world of Middle Earth. Remember, the shaman does not make his or her vision quest for self-glorification, but to be a source of help to others.

Whatever the shape of your retreat you will emerge refreshed and spaced. You will be distanced from the problems of living, so that they seem less threatening and easier to cope with. If the retreat has been less successful, don't despair: it will have taught you many useful things, and shown you which areas of your life need adjustment or rethinking. Take away the home-environment, your favourite food and television programmes, your cigarettes or whiskey, the company of other human beings, and you are reduced to yourself. If you are incomplete without these stimuli then you are not in touch with the real you. The retreat is a revealer under whose challenge even seemingly strong personalities are brought up short. Don't expect the effect of the retreat to last for ever: we are none of us practised in the skills of inner awareness to a very high degree. Without daily meditation, results are slow and, even then, you can never afford to rest on your laurels.



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